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The Politics of Transindividuality

Jason Read

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The Politics of Transindividuality

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By

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*This book is dedicated to the event that interrupted it:
the Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Maine actions, and to everyone who
strives for a more just form of collective and individual existence.*



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List of Abbreviations

All citations in this book are included in the footnotes according to the author/date method. The one exception to this is Spinoza's *Ethics*, which is cited in the text according to the standard method outlined below.

Spinoza's Works

<i>E</i>	<i>Ethics Demonstrated in Geometric Order (...)</i> (<i>Ethica ...</i>)
App	Appendix
Ax	Axiom
C	Corollary
D	Definition
Def. Affs.	Definition of the Affects
Dem	Demonstration
Lem	Lemma
P	Proposition
Pos	Postulate
Pref	Preface
S	Scholium

Transindividuality (A Concept for Marxism)

It is impossible to know anything about men except on the absolute precondition that the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes.

LOUIS ALTHUSSER



The current historical moment can be described as the predominance of the individual over the collective. The individual reigns supreme in politics, as an ethic of individual rights and freedoms displaces any project of collective liberation. In economics this is even more the case, as the utility maximising individual of neoliberal economics trumps not only any other idea of economic relations, but subsumes all social relations. Traditions and institutions have been stripped bare, revealing the calculating, self-interested individual that always supposedly lurked underneath. Individual self-interest has become the template through which all actions can be interpreted. The political and economic assertion of the individual is completed by a cultural ideal of complete and utter self-expression and independence. To deny this dominance, to assert that there might be other forces at work politically, other causes to be considered economically, and other values to aspire to ethically or culturally, is to be branded as a collectivist, to be burdened with the ghost of the past century's crimes and catastrophes. The individual has become not only the basis of political, cultural, and economic understanding but also the extent of all of our aspirations; the individual is both methodologically and prescriptively dominant; it is simultaneously all one needs to make sense of the world and the best that one could hope from it.

This complete and utter assertion of the dominance of the individual, politically, economically, and ethically is haunted by the spectre of its own impotence. Forces beyond its control constantly risk dwarfing it. The names that are most often used to reflect the economic, social, and political changes of the past few decades, such as globalisation, financialisation, and various invocations of technology, media, and the Internet, have, as something of a common denominator, an inability to name organisations, ideologies, or goals, or any practice or subject orienting the changes. In its place we get the imper-

sonal force of finances, the development and progress of technology, or the sheer brutal assertion of the world, global connection as an unavoidable fact of existence. To the extent that the social or political appears, it appears then as not something that can be altered, acted on, and changed, but as something which exists only as an impersonal force. Thus, to complete this rough sketch of the reigning ideology, one could say that it is caught between an ideal of the individual and a dim awareness of social relations, of social conditions, that can only be perceived as a hostile or at the very least inevitable force.

Eclipsed by such a social imaginary is not only collectivity, but more importantly the point of intersection between collectivity, or social relations, and the individual. The two have become a strict binary: either we think in terms of the individual, making it both an analytic and evaluative centre of our thought, or we affirm an all-encompassing collective, which washes the individual away in a night in which all jumpsuits are grey. Such a division between the individual and the collective can be considered a remnant of philosophy's long cold war, which divided the history of philosophy into those who championed the individual, and those who championed the collective, understood in terms of nature, history, or the state. The former became the precursor of the reigning individualistic consensus, the latter precursors of the gulags and atrocities. That such a division is left over from the cold war would suggest that there is a need to overcome it, to rethink a binary between individual and society that is as trenchant as it is rigid. Moreover, as I have tried to hint above, it seems woefully out of touch with the changing contours and dimensions of contemporary social relations. Both sides of the divide, the individual and collective, have changed historically, and it is precisely such a static binary that makes it impossible to engage the history of individuals and collectives, obscuring both in a static binary of the individual versus society. Today's masses are connected by new forms of media, and are engaged in different relations of economic dependence and domination from those that haunted the nineteenth century. Similarly, our isolation and fragmentation have been transformed as well. Technology and economic relations have made it more and more possible to be alone, to work and live without intersecting with others. The problem is not just that we lack any understanding of collectivity, but also that we lack any understanding of how individuality and collectivity affect and transform each other. This limitation is not just found on the side of the dominant discourses, in neoliberalism and rational choice theory; it is also found on the side of the various political moments and discourses that endeavour to change the world. If the reigning order can be described as caught between the rational individual and the

global order, then opposition to it is equally caught between anarchistic self-expression and nostalgia for some structure or collective big enough to change the world.

In the text known as the 1857 *Introduction*, Karl Marx takes on the tendency within classical, or bourgeois, political economy to take as its starting point the isolated and independent individual. At first, his critique would seem to stress the familiar theme of historicisation, arguing that what the economist takes as 'history's point of departure' must instead be seen as a 'historic result'.¹ The isolated individual of the Robinsonades is, like the novel from which it takes its name, a product of the historical dissolution of feudalism in the eighteenth century. To take the individual as a product rather than the origin of history does not mean simply dismissing it as a fiction, but comprehending it as a condition and effect of history. As Marx writes:

Only in the eighteenth century, in 'civil society', do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity. But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations. The human being is in the most literal sense a 'political animal', not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside of society ... is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living *together* and talking to each other.²

This passage adds several elements to the argument regarding the historical conditions of the individual. First, it situates these conditions within a contradiction: the individual is a historical product not because society has become more fragmented, isolated, and independent, but precisely because of an increase and development of social relations. The more that society is connected, related, the more that relation appears as isolation. This contradiction perhaps sounds more like a paradox: how can development lead to isolation, connection to fragmentation? It is possible to read much of the critical concepts of Marx's thought from alienation to commodity fetishism as an answer to this question, as different ways of grasping the general conditions for such isolation. Second, Marx supplements his historical argument with something that,

¹ Marx 1973, p. 83.

² Marx 1973, p. 84.

depending on how one wanted to read it, could be considered a philosophical anthropology or ontology. Drawing from Aristotle's famous definition of man as a political animal, Marx turns not to the polis as a necessary condition of human existence, but to the fact that individuation can only take place in the midst of society. Politics, or society, is a necessary condition not only for individual existence, securing and protecting humanity from dangers it is not prepared to face as a collection of individuals, but also for individuation. It is only through politics, through society, that anything like individuation is possible. Marx underscores this fact through his reference to language, which is the collective condition for individual expression and articulation. Individuation is not opposed to society, but only develops through it. One does not need a desert island to become an individual, but, on the contrary, an entire city.³

Of course Marx's critique of bourgeois individualism could be understood as a valorisation of the collective over and above the individual. Such a reading would place Marx solely within the holistic side of the collective-individual divide. Two things prevent Marx from being aligned with such a view. First, Marx is just as much a critic of society understood as something standing above the individual as he is of the individual as something standing outside of society. As with the critique of bourgeois ideology, this is as much a critique of the perspective of political economy and of capitalist social relations. It is a critique of the way things appear in capitalist society, and the social relations that produce this appearance; or, framed differently, it is a critique of social relations in capitalist society, and the discourses, such as political economy, which naturalise these relations. The crux of Marx's critique, beginning with *The German Ideology*, is that it is precisely in effacing the connections and relations between individuals, in starting with the isolated individual, that 'society' appears as a force independent of the individuals that constitute it. Individual and society are complementary notions, caught in a rigid binary that frames them in perpetual opposition. Thus, as Luca Basso argues, the overcoming of this opposition necessitates not just a revalorisation of the collective at the expense of the individual, but also the transformation of each.⁴

3 Marx's idea of individuation through social relations has an odd precursor in Descartes. In the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes reflects on his urban social conditions as a combination of individuation and socialisation. As Descartes writes, 'I have been able to live as solitary and as retired a life as I could in the remotest deserts – but without lacking any of the amenities that are to be found in the most populous cities' (Descartes 1988, p. 18).

4 Basso 2012, p. 116.

Marx's perspective is ultimately one in which the individual has to be seen as constitutive of social relations, and vice versa, what he sometimes called 'the social individual'.⁵

Marx's perspective proves itself to be a precursor of the current conjuncture outlined above, outlining a mutual relation of connection and isolation that has only deepened since the nineteenth century. Marx could not have anticipated the extension of the social relations, the global relations of production that are the condition of nearly every existence, the way in which the simplest act, from buying a meal to writing an essay, encompasses the labours and relations of numerous individuals around the world. Moreover, Marx's image of the isolated bourgeois subject who views all relations with others as a means to his or her personal end, could not anticipate new forces of isolation and fragmentation made possible in contemporary society; consumption, work, and entertainment have ceased to be necessarily collective endeavours, performed in isolation or in front of solitary screens. Marx's perspective also sets up two problems that will be examined in this project, problems that can be broadly defined as the historical and ontological dimension of individuation. Of course these two problems intersect, the latter is in some sense the condition of the former, but they also diverge, not just in terms of their methods but also their focus. As the passage from Marx above suggests, while the ontological question is to understand how it is that the individual emerges from collective conditions, the historical question is how to grasp the effacement of the collective conditions of individuation. How can social relations produce their own effacement? The concept through which I will address these problems is 'transindividuality' or 'transindividuation'. The terms are drawn most directly from the work of Gilbert Simondon, most notably his massive *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* which encompasses both *L'individuation et sa genèse physico-biologique* and *L'individuation psychique et collective*. Simondon's concept of transindividuality is framed by two general theses. The first is a radical break with the centrality of the individual in philosophical thought. Rather than assume that everything that exists must be an individual, that individuality is a principle that encompasses everything, Simondon argues that individuation must be thought of as process. Individuation is a process through which a pre-individual state, a state that is necessarily in tension or conflict, resolves itself, or is resolved into a process of individuation. Simondon understands this general relation to define physical, biological, psychic, and collective individuation, all of which individuate or are individuated differently. This prob-

5 Marx 1973, p. 772.

lematic, or incomplete, nature of individuation explains Simondon's second general thesis, one that is just as striking with respect to conventional wisdom. Simondon argues that psychic individuation, the individuation that constitutes a character, personality, or psyche, is not opposed to collective individuation, but rather is integral to it, and vice versa. It is because individuation is never complete, that the pre-individual sensations and affects which form the basis of our individuation never cohere, that psychic individuation must attempt to resolve itself in collective structures and relations. Transindividuation is the process by which the individual and collective are constituted. Simondon's concept of transindividuation thus breaks with a longstanding binary that sees the relationship between individual and collective as a zero-sum game – seeking instead their mutual points of intersection and transformation.

Simondon's concept and vocabulary offer a fundamental challenge to two cherished precepts of contemporary ideology and common sense: the presupposition of the individual as a fundamental starting point for ontological, social, and political thought, and the opposition between individuality and collectivity, the zero-sum game which posits any increase in the former as a decrease in the latter, and vice versa. Moreover, its critical perspective is not just oriented towards dismissing, or even criticising, individuation, but in situating it as part of a process. The individual is situated with respect to the relations that constitute and individuate it: it has a reality, but is not all of reality. As much as Simondon's perspective cuts through the old ideals of individual and society, destroying what are more remnants of old ideologies than philosophical perspectives, providing a new philosophical vocabulary and perspective, its orientation is more of a general ontology, or ontogenesis, than a historical-critical philosophy. Or, put differently, Simondon's perspective lacks the attentiveness to the changing historical, economic, and political forces that shape and change individuation. It is for this reason that this project is framed between Marx's provocation, which points towards the socio-historical transformations of individuation in contemporary capitalism and Simondon's ontology or ontogenesis of individuation. Socio-historical investigation and the ontological speculation are placed in a relation that is one of tension as much as completion, reinforcing but transforming each other.

In his interviews with Fernando Navarra, titled *Sur la Philosophie*, Louis Althusser argues that his idea of 'aleatory materialism' is not a Marxist concept, but a concept for Marxism.⁶ Althusser's distinction draws a line between those concepts that can be drawn from Marx's writing, and those concepts which,

6 Althusser 1994, pp. 37–8.

though external to the articulation or even logic of Marx's writing, provide a supplement to the objectives, problems, and concepts of Marx's thought. Two caveats can be added to this distinction. First, as any reader of Althusser's writing on the subterranean history of aleatory materialism can attest, this distinction is not rigorously maintained in Althusser's thought. Marx's writing on 'primitive accumulation' is as integral to the development of the concept of the aleatory materialism as is the writing of Machiavelli and Epicurus. In Althusser's work, the concept of 'aleatory materialism' is as much a matter of illustrating and bringing to light neglected dimensions of Marx's thought as it is drawn from sources external to Marx's thought. Secondly, viewed in this light, Althusser's distinction between a 'concept of' and 'concept for' is not radically distinct from other attempts to philosophise in the wake of Marx in which attempts to elucidate the inner logic are always paired with attempts to add a crucial supplement. The various philosophical approaches to Marx from dialectical materialism to desiring production have all added a philosophical conceptualisation to Marx that they argued was in some sense already there, already at work in Marx's logic, rhetoric, and philosophical practice. Althusser's distinction then reveals less a rigorous division between the internal and the external than an examination of the manner in which these lines are continually being redrawn. In this project, transindividuality is situated in the same conceptual space as Althusser's aleatory materialism; it is at once a concept internal to Marx's thought, as the passage above suggests, and a supplement drawn from diverse philosophical sources. The relation between Marx and Simondon could be understood as framed through this relation of supplement, in which philosophical vocabulary and socio-historical analysis constantly reinforce, problematise, and transform each other.

While Simondon's theory of individuation is placed at the centre of this project (quite literally, examined in Chapter 2) it is not its exclusive or even primary concern. My interest is in the broad use of the term transindividuality. This broadening takes two forms. First, following a series of remarks by Étienne Balibar, it examines the extent to which transindividuality, as we have already established, can be found in the work of Marx, but also Spinoza and Hegel.⁷ These three names are not precursors of Simondon (as we will see, they play a marginal role in the development of Simondon's thought), but are transindividual thinkers in their own right. Their attempts to think outside of the binary of individual and collective perhaps can only now be grasped, in light of new vocabularies and shifting languages. Second, there is the contem-

7 Balibar 1995b, p. 121.

porary work on transindividuality, or multiple works and traditions, in such thinkers as Bernard Stiegler, Paolo Virno, and Yves Citton. This latter collection is post-Simondonian in that it directly draws from Simondon's work and concepts, something that of course Marx, Hegel, and Spinoza could not do, but it is not necessarily faithful to the protocols of a strictly Simondonian reading. Stiegler, Virno, Citton, and, to some extent, Maurizio Lazzarato are all primarily concerned with a central philosophical and political problem: how to conceptualise the changing nature of subjectivity and social relations in contemporary capitalism. The extent to which they draw on Simondon is subordinated to this task. It is also because of this that they draw from other philosophical sources, including to some extent the broader philosophical lineage of Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx. Thus, the two sides of the inquiry, the constitution of a pre-Simondonian current of transindividual thinkers and the post-Simondonian critiques, constantly intersect.

With respect to the former, the excavation of a kind of subterranean current of transindividuality is not meant to simply produce a philosophical pedigree for a neologism, but to develop the critical dimension of transindividuality. In many ways this continues the thread started with the passage from the *Grundrisse* above, in which transindividual relations produce, or are perceived as, their opposite, as isolated individuals. Framing this contradiction, and its critique, through Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx produces less a repetition of the same basic formula than a shifting of the problem between philosophical registers that are anthropological, economic, and political. Spinoza's critique of the anthropological and theological idea of man as a 'kingdom within a kingdom', Hegel's critique of the isolated individual of civil society, and Marx's critique of the bourgeois Robinsonades, do not address the same individuations, or the same structures. While the objects of their critique differ according to their historical conjuncture, shifting from religion to politics within the transformation of society, their positive accounts of transindividuality shift as well. Most important in this respect is the tension, even the contradiction, between Hegelian accounts of transindividuality, often framed through the theme of recognition, and the revival of a Spinozist account of social relations. Reading Marx alongside Hegel and Spinoza illustrates and exemplifies what is at stake in turning to transindividuality rather than intersubjectivity as an account of social and political relations.

The sequence Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx is less a tradition than it is an articulated set of points of relation and opposition. To borrow another formulation from Althusser, it is necessary to make a detour through Spinoza to understand Marx's detour through Hegel. While Althusser's formulation stands, its terms have radically shifted. While the problems for Althusser had to do with

contradiction, dialectic, and teleology, points all drawn from Hegel but necessarily reformulated with respect to Marx's materialism, in such a way that Marx came closer to Spinoza, the contemporary turn to Spinoza is framed around different points. A recent group of Marxist Spinozists including Étienne Balibar, Antonio Negri, Pascal Sévérac, Frédéric Lordon, and Yves Citton, as well as precursors such as Alexandre Matheron, have turned to Spinoza not to develop an alternative to Hegelian dialectics, or an understanding of the structural causality of the mode of production, but to develop in different senses the transindividual dimensions of social existence. What comes to light in this latest turn to Spinoza is an interest not so much in the structure of Spinoza's thought in general, but in the affects, imagination, reason, and striving, all of which are understood as defining the structure of transindividual existence. The sequence Spinoza, Hegel, Marx, reveals then different ways of thinking of individuation, and its transformation, and it is by framing the three together that the importance of Spinoza as a thinker of social relations increasingly comes to light. It is still a matter of a return to Spinoza to think the difference between Hegel and Marx, but now that difference is conceptualised according to the transindividual nature of desire and the affects rather than the more metaphysical questions of teleology, expression, and immanence that preoccupied Althusser. Whereas a previous generation turned to Spinoza to escape teleology and idealism, a new generation turns to Spinoza to posit a theory of social relations that is rigorously transindividual, avoiding the pitfalls of the dialectics of recognition.

This expansion into the prehistory of transindividuality is complemented by an expansion in the opposite direction, not towards its prehistory but towards its history and development after Simondon. Philosophers such as Paolo Virno, Bernard Stiegler, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Yves Citton have placed transindividuality at the centre of their concept of contemporary capitalism. Stiegler, Virno and Citton are less concerned with the presence, or absence, of a transindividual dimension to Marx's thought, than with the manner in which contemporary capitalism entails or necessitates a transindividual critique. The underlying question is one of a transformation of capital, of the way in which the capitalist mode of production has come to encompass, or subsume, the constitution and transformation of collective and individual individuation. The approaches of Virno, Stiegler, and Citton all have in common a mode of enquiry that can be considered economic and philosophical, framing together philosophical concepts and political and social transformations. The general points of inquiry are as follows: First, at the level of political economy or its critique, there is the attempt to grasp the current conjuncture, the current articulation of capitalism, according to its constituent dimension of immaterial labour, cog-

nitive capitalism, Post-Fordism, etc. All of which are not just different names, but different understandings of the defining characteristics of capital, the constituent role of labour, technology, or knowledge in contemporary capitalism. Second, each of these descriptions, as they have been developed in contemporary Marxist thought, especially the traditions known as Post-Autonomia, are understood not simply to be transformations of the economy, of simply the manner in which goods and services are produced and circulated, but of the fundamental aspects of subjectivity, even reality. Which is to say that we are dealing with a particular mode of philosophical articulation, situated between a critical economic discourse, with its demands of historical specificity, and a philosophical ontology, with its demand of generality. Such a discourse always risks being found lacking on both sides. First, from the perspective of history, or a historically aware critique of political economy, any statement regarding the tendency of capital in general, or of labour in general, overlooks the complexity and contradictions of the present; second, from the perspective of philosophy, any introduction of the specifics of contemporary capitalism into an argument regarding the fundamental dimensions of subjectivity seems to be an extraneous assertion, an empirical argument rather than a conceptual determination. Thus, any such discourse, which could be called 'economic/philosophic', to borrow the title of Marx's 1844 notebooks (a text which is never far from such concerns), could disappoint both sides of the disciplinary divide by simultaneously being too abstract and too concrete, historicist and lacking in historical specificity, all at once. However, it is not just that such an examination has its merits, merits which would have to be balanced against its drawbacks, but that transindividuality as we have developed it here cannot simply be an ontological or even a political articulation of individuation; it must also be economic – situated against the backdrop of the transformations of production and consumption – and political – situated against the changing relations and representations that define collective belonging.

Any economic argument, any argument which focuses on the specific social or technical characteristics of a given mode of production, will necessarily have to confront the combined and uneven development of the capitalist mode of production, which is to say the tensions and contradictions of history itself. This has been a philosophical problem since Marx, who as much as he stressed the increasing importance of the factory, and of industrial labour, reminding his German readers that the description of industrialisation concerned them as well, also thought from the uneven development of capitalism. Marx's early writings on philosophy argued that philosophy itself, or at least German Idealism, was a product of the combined and uneven development of history. *Capital* continues this exploration of the uneven development of historical time, as the

capitalist mode of production itself is framed between primitive accumulation, the violence of its founding, and the factory of large-scale industry, the culmination of its logic. For Marx, the colonies and slavery are not only necessary conditions for the development of capitalism, but also shed light on its own relations and constitutive process.⁸ They are not simply the remnants of its origin, but its constituent conditions. There is thus a tension in Marx's thought between the examination of the dominant form of production, the 'general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity', and the heterogeneity of the conjuncture, a tension between unity and difference.⁹ This tension is complicated by the specific nature of capitalism itself, which as a form is relatively indifferent to the specific technical and social dimension of labour, in the period of formal subsumption, only to develop the 'specifically capitalist mode of production', the technical and social conditions of real subsumption.¹⁰ Marx presents the development of the former to the latter as a linear progression, but also stresses that the former continues to coexist with the latter, as less developed forms of production coexist with more advanced. The differential temporality not only defines capital against previous modes of production, but it includes its internal difference and progress. Capital is more general, more abstract than previous modes of production, defined only by its constitutive conditions of abstract labour power and commodification, and it is more specific, defined by its constitutive differences. Capitalism is at work wherever commodity production and the selling of labour power are dominant, but these basic forms are subject to multiple specifications and mutations. It is in this way that transindividuality can be seen as both a persistent aspect of capitalist production, of any labour process, necessarily encompassing collective forms of knowledge and their individual expression, and as something which makes possible an understanding of the specific transformations of contemporary capitalism. Capitalism, like any mode of production, is constituted not of individuals, but of transindividual relations of knowledge, desire, and labour, but the specific articulation of these dimensions changes in each historical moment.

While the tensions and contradictions of the philosophical and historical dimensions of transindividuality, its status as a general ontology of social relations and a particular critique of the capitalist mode of production, are central to this project constituting an animating tension, they are not its exclusive

8 Marx 1977, p. 932.

9 Marx 1973, p. 107.

10 Marx 1977, p. 1035.

focus. Just as important is the tension between the politics and economics of transindividuality, between transindividuality considered as the formation of political subjectivity, individual and collective, and transindividuality as it is shaped by the demands of capitalist production and consumption. This can be considered a classic question, a variation of the old question of base and superstructure, politics and economics. However, it would seem that one of the merits of the concept of transindividuality would be to introduce some novelty to this old question. It is by examining the processes through which individuality and collectivity are constituted and transformed that one can arrive at an understanding of the politics of the economy and the economic conditions of politics that is less about determination and levels than it is about the affects, ideas, and relations that traverse both levels. The ultimate merit of such a project is not simply that it will cut through the individual and collective binary that forestalls any thought of politics, but that it will also perhaps provide the precondition for a new practice of politics.

The Structure of the Book

The general structure of this book is composed of four chapters and three excurses. The first chapter is situated between two general philosophical problems. First, it reads Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx as transindividual thinkers, focusing on their specific manner of articulating an ontology, politics, or critique of political economy that focuses on the constitutive nature of relations. In examining these different precursors to transindividuality, the common thread, the point of contact that keeps this from simply being a survey of different approaches, is the critical nature of their account of transindividuality. Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx all develop a critical perspective with respect to the reigning ideas of individuality at their time. The objects of this critique change according to the political and historical conditions of their writing: Spinoza's critique targets the idea of man as 'kingdom within a kingdom', Hegel's critique is aimed at the isolated self-interested individual that is at the basis of civil society, and Marx's critique is directed against the bourgeois individual of the sphere of exchange. What remains the same, however, unifying their different approaches within one critical perspective, is that critique is not a simple act of denunciation, or even clarifying a true versus a false perspective. In each case the critical task is to show how it is that transindividual relations can generate an individualistic perspective. The individualist perspective must be comprehended as much as it is denounced, revealing its constitutive conditions and not simply its conceptual errors. This shift of per-

spective and awareness is also a transformation and development of political subjectivity. It is on this point, rather than the differences of historical object, that the difference between Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx becomes most salient. The three thinkers differ not only in terms of how they understand the transformation from the inadequate or ideological idea of the individual to an apprehension of its constitutive relations, but also in terms of whether or not they even see this as possible. It is through this difference that we can discern their politics or effects on politics. Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx also provide the foundations for later discussions of transindividuality as their accounts of affects, politics, and political economy are returned to again throughout the text.

The first excursus is dedicated to the thought of Étienne Balibar, whose remarks on transindividuality, as well as his essays and books on Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx constitute something of a central provocation of the first chapter. The focus of this first excursus, however, is not simply on assessing Balibar's readings of Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, contrasting them to other readings, or the supposed truth of their texts. Rather the focus is on Balibar's development of a transindividual political anthropology, a development that is drawn from a reading of Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx but is not reducible to a synthesis of all three. This is true not just of its objects, Balibar's critical perspective on race, nation, and sexual identity exceeds anything Spinoza, Marx, or Hegel could have anticipated, but of its method as well. Balibar constructs both a history of transindividual political anthropology, focusing on the historical and overdetermined ground of collective and individual identity. This historical account is itself transformed or modified by a more structural account in which every transindividual individuation is understood to be made up of rational and imaginative dimensions, actual social relations and their representation. The tension between these sets up one method for understanding the politics and economics of transindividuation. These excurses, like the ones that follow, are as much investigations into a singular account of transindividuality, a singular transindividual thinker, as they are different formulations of the politics and economics of transindividuality.

Chapter 2 turns to the work of the thinker who coined the term transindividuality, Gilbert Simondon. As I have already mentioned, Simondon functions as a necessary but not exclusive foundation for a consideration of the concept. The emphasis in this chapter is more on the problematic nature of the concept of transindividuality. First, on how the concept emerges from two problems in Simondon's work, the philosophy of technology and the question of individuation. These two dimensions of Simondon's thought are in relative tension, and it is perhaps because of this tension that many readers of Simondon have pro-

duced different interpretations of transindividuation, effectively individuating his thought in different ways. Bernard Stiegler, Paolo Virno, and Gilles Deleuze have articulated different understandings of individuation in terms of its relation to the history of technology, philosophical anthropology, and ontology. Finally, I look at Simondon's remarks on Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, focusing on the extent to which Simondon provides a critique of the problem of individuation in each. Simondon's critiques demonstrate to what extent attempts to escape from a philosophy of the individual end up falling back on the very individuation that they try to evade, most notably in displacing the individual person with some larger, all-encompassing individuation, nature, history, or the economy. However, following the first chapter, and anticipating the readings that follow, this critique is turned back on Simondon, or at least his readings of Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, demonstrating to what extent their engagement with individuation not only exceeds his reading, but poses problems to Simondon's apolitical and ahistorical account of individuation. Following Simondon's own remark on the necessarily problematic nature of individuation, the way in which individuation stems from tensions and problems, it is possible to argue that this chapter is a matter of individuating a concept of transindividuation framed by both an interpretation of Simondon, and problematisation of his interpretation of other philosophers.

The second excursus takes up one of the most interesting, albeit problematic, intersections of the two accounts of transindividuation: Spinoza and Simondon on emotions and affect. Spinoza and Simondon both see affect or emotions as transindividual, forming both collective structures and the intimacy of subjectivity. This point of contiguity, with its constitutive differences, makes it possible to construct a social and political theory of affects. The focus of this excursus is the work of Frédéric Lordon, who has developed a Spinozist critique of the organisation of affects and desire in capitalism. Lordon develops a theory of what I call 'the affective composition of capital', and in doing so overcomes some of the limitations articulated in Chapter 1. Lordon argues that the constitutive conditions of Spinoza's thought, the focus on the transindividuality and singularity of affects make it possible to shift Spinoza's analysis beyond the critique of religious superstition to a critique of the mobilisation of the affects in contemporary capitalism. As much as Lordon is the focus of this excursus, it is not exclusively focused on his work. It encompasses other contemporary interpreters who draw from and develop Spinoza, such as Pascal Sévérac and Laurent Bove, as well as other theorists of contemporary capitalism. Excursus Two not only develops a central point of the second chapter, Simondon and Spinoza as theorists of affect, it also connects the early work on Spinoza with the latter critiques of political economy. In effect it argues that

while Spinoza's critique of the individual was focused on religion, his transindividual ontology of relations is useful to a critique of political economy.

Chapter 3 turns to the post-Simondon critique of political economy developed by Bernard Stiegler and Paolo Virno. Stiegler and Virno posit, in different ways, an intersection between transindividuality and capitalism that Marx could not anticipate. Stiegler argues that what Marx could not anticipate is the rise of consumer society. Consumer society solves fundamental problems of the capitalist economy, absorbing the massive amounts of commodities produced and dissipating any revolutionary fervour, any sense of having nothing but chains to lose, but it also radically restructures individuation. Stiegler argues that consumer society effectively short-circuits the connections with tradition that have constituted the basis for collective and individual subjectivity. In contrast to this, Virno argues that it is labour, specifically the labour of post-Fordist society, that focuses on communication, knowledge, and interaction, which Marx could not anticipate. Taken together, Stiegler and Virno draw a picture of the increasing commodification of the pre-individual, as the basic factors of experience, affects, sensations, and desires, are bought and sold, and an increasing exploitation of the transindividual, as the fundamental relational and individuating aspects of human existence, from knowledge to affects, become part of the production process. As much as these different pictures could be divided along the lines of consumption and production, as two conflicting individuations, they converge on the same constitution of political subjectivity, with very different effects.

Excursus Three is dedicated to the work of Maurizio Lazzarato. Lazzarato's work mirrors that of Stiegler and Virno in that it is dedicated to comprehending the contemporary transformations of capital through a philosophy and ontology that overcomes the divide between individual and collective. Unlike Stiegler and Virno, however, Lazzarato's point of reference is not Gilbert Simondon but Gabriel Tarde. Tarde's focus on imitation and invention as fundamental aspects of social existence makes it possible to engage with the intersection between individuation and social structures. As much as Lazzarato's work functions as an important point of contrast with those that draw from Simondon, the focus is less on comparing and contrasting different social ontologies than on the manner in which Lazzarato articulates politics and political economy. Lazzarato develops a concept of 'noopolitics' – the politics of thoughts, habits, and beliefs. Noopolitics, as Lazzarato sees it, is integral to contemporary capitalism.

Chapter 4 functions as a concluding chapter, drawing together the different approaches and understandings of transindividuality into a coherent set of problems. In doing so, it brings together the two major themes of the book,

the politics and economics of transindividuality. The final chapter ties together the different excurses as well, drawing together the specific examinations of Balibar, Lordon, and Lazzarato with the general examination of the politics and economics of transindividuation. The central question is not just what does the relationship between politics and economics look like with respect to transindividuality, but what does transindividuality offer for a thinking of politics? Following the work of Yves Citton, and drawing together elements of Spinoza, Marx, and Balibar, I argue that transindividuality constitutes a new orientation in thinking about both economics and politics, focusing less on the idea of a collective or individual subject for politics than on the processes by which political subjects, and more importantly political pressures, are constituted and destroyed. The ultimate focus of this book is less on selecting a true or accurate account of transindividuality, than it is on developing transindividuality as a problematic, an orientation that can cut through the ossified opposition of individual and society to make possible new analyses and practices.

Transindividuality as Critique: Spinoza, Hegel, Marx

Philosophical Practice

Like any new philosophical concept, neologism, or problem, the concept of transindividuality has a retroactive function, making possible a rereading of other figures and concepts in the history of philosophy. To paraphrase Jorge Luis Borges, every philosopher creates his precursors. However, as we will see in the next chapter, when we turn to Gilbert Simondon's development of the concept, Simondon is not always interested in such a retroactive reading, and tends to overemphasise his break with what came before. There is perhaps a tendency for every new philosophical innovation to overemphasise its novelty, its break with existing concepts and problems. Which is not to underestimate the novelty of transindividuality as a concept and problem, just to suggest that it is not without its precursors. The divide between individualism and totality has become a persistent theme in interpretations of the history of philosophy. This theme has generally been one of division, dividing the history of philosophy between individualists and wholists. Thus a reading of transindividuality in the history of philosophy has at least two functions: First, it opens up the concept to its potential prehistory, making it possible to see the way in which the problem of social relations has been posed outside of the binary of individual versus society, liberating it from the persistence of dualism and division. Second, it makes it possible to grasp the specific novelty of transindividuality in terms of its ontology, politics, and philosophy of society.

Étienne Balibar has argued that Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx (and also Freud) could all be considered transindividual thinkers.¹ In this chapter, Balibar's remark functions as a kind of provocation and problem. While I will draw from his engagements with Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, my point here is not to produce a reading of Balibar's texts alone, or a Balibarian reading, whatever that might mean, of Spinoza, Hegel and Marx. (I will turn to Balibar's particular use of transindividuality in the excursus that follows this chapter). My goal is simultaneously larger, encompassing multiple engagements with Spinoza, Hegel,

¹ Balibar 1995b, p. 121.

and Marx, and more restricted, since it is an attempt to place these three different thoughts of transindividuality together, to follow a singular concept, a concept that will be simultaneously defined and problematised in this inquiry. It is not a question of a tradition, at least in the strong sense of the word, even though the influences between these thinkers are undeniable, but of a particular practice of philosophy.² It is a matter of a practice of philosophy in two senses: First, it is an engagement with the specific practice of philosophy of each of the philosophers, the way that they each develop this account of transindividuality against individualist ontologies, anthropologies, and understandings of social relations. To the extent that these three thinkers articulate a concept of transindividuality, they do so critically, through a critical engagement with the predominance of the individual in ontological, political, and economic thought.

The model of criticism I am referring to here is less Kant's transcendental critique than it is Marx's critique of German Idealism in *The German Ideology*. In that text, Marx does not just denounce idealism, declaring it to be false, but demonstrates how, through the material process of history, it comes to appear that 'consciousness determines life'.³ Idealism, and the idealist interpretation of history, must be understood to be an effect of history, a product of the division of mental and manual labour, rather than the motor of historical change. Thus, in this case, it is not enough to simply denounce the limitations of an individualistic understanding of social relations, and propose an alternate ontology of transindividuality, to resort to a sterile opposition of true to false, it is necessary to explain how the latter paradoxically constitutes the former. How is it that through social relations, through transindividuality, people come to see themselves as a kingdom within a kingdom, and posit society as nothing other than the sum total of self-interested competitive relations. In other words (Marx's to be precise), how the most developed social relations produce the most isolated individuals.⁴ This perspective is not limited to Marx, and can be found, in different ways, in all three of the philosophers considered here: Spinoza shows how the inadequate idea of the autonomous individual, the kingdom within a kingdom, is a product of transindividual affective relations; Hegel demonstrates how the isolated individual emerges as the effect and condition of civil society; and Marx traces the emergence of the bourgeois subject through history. The critical dimension defines both the strengths of Spinoza, Hegel, and

2 Balibar 1995a, p. 143.

3 Read 2003, p. 64.

4 Marx 1973, p. 223.

Marx's position, making it clear that transindividuality is not simply a philosophical perspective that can simply be chosen, but must be framed through an active engagement with the spontaneous philosophy of the individual. This critical conception also constitutes something of a limit in that to whatever extent each of the philosophers develop a concept that could be considered transindividual *avant la lettre*, they do so primarily through a critical engagement with the individual. Critique preceeds construction and limits it. It is for this reason, and not simply chronology, that this chapter comes before the analysis of Gilbert Simondon's concept of transindividuality in the next chapter.

Second, what I am calling the practice of philosophy refers to the practice of placing these different philosophies together, of placing together the problem of transindividuality as it crosses the domains of ontology, politics, and political economy, without necessarily reducing one to the other. It is possible to think of the first as their identity and the second as their difference, as the different philosophical systems cross the terrain of ontology, phenomenology, and political economy. Thus, placing them together already entails a central claim, which will be elaborated and justified in the following pages: the question of collectivity, of transindividuality, is not only simultaneously ontological, political and economic, encompassing the different senses in which things, or people, can be said to be individuated, but it is so in a manner that cannot be neatly, or hierarchically, organised.

It is not a matter of an ontology founding a politics, or the opposite, a critique of politics, or political economy, dismissing ontology as simply ideology. Neither ontology, politics, nor political economy are foundational because the question of collectivity is simultaneously ontological, encompassing the most fundamental way of thinking collective and individual, and socio-historical, intersecting with a specific way of thinking of individuality. Transindividuality cuts through divisions, and hierarchy, making it possible to see the politics within ontology and the ontology in politics. As Louis Althusser argues, it is 'necessary to get rid of the suspect division between philosophy and politics which at one and the same time treats the political figures as inferior – that is, as non-philosophers or Sunday afternoon philosophers – and also implies that the political positions of philosophers must be sought exclusively in the texts in which they talk about philosophy'.⁵ This assertion, which is perhaps more influential than Althusser's own particular project, can be seen as integral to mul-

5 Althusser 1990, p. 206. As much as this assertion is fundamental to Althusser's concept of 'Philosophical Practice' as taken up by Balibar, it is also integral to much of the recent revival of interest in Spinoza. Much of the recent interest in Spinoza from Matheron to Negri begins by reading the ontology, spelled out in the *Ethics*, through the political works, the *Tractatus*

multiple political philosophical projects which examine the political dimensions of such ontological or metaphysical concepts as order, event, and potential as well as the ontological dimensions of political notions of power, state, and conflict, is particularly fundamental to an examination of transindividuality, a concept which, as much as it makes possible a reflection of social and political realities, cannot be separated from a broader reflection on individuality and relations.⁶ To risk a glib phrase, it is only possible to arrive at an understanding of relations through a relation of ontology, politics, and economics.

Spinoza

Spinoza's critical account of the individual in the Appendix to Part One of the *Ethics* is perhaps the natural starting place for an account of transindividuality in Spinoza. That text offers a critique of the idea of an anthropomorphic god, a god that acts as humans do, towards particular ends, demonstrating how ultimately it stems from an inadequate anthropocentric understanding of the universe, the assumption that whatever exists does so for our needs. It is the individual that is at stake, not just in terms of God understood as an individual, but also in terms of the inadequate idea of individuality that is at its foundation. It is because we believe ourselves to be separate from the order of nature, a kingdom within a kingdom, that we create such illusions. The implications of this critique for not only humanism, but also teleology and religion are so great that Althusser referred to this section as the 'matrix of every possible theory of ideology'.⁷ Despite the Appendix's extended effects as a critique of ideology (primarily through the work of Althusser), it is necessary to view it first through its position within the *Ethics*. As the Appendix to Part One, on God,

Theologico-Politicus and the *Political Treatise*, and vice versa. Negri has gone the furthest in this direction, proclaiming that 'the real political science of modernity lies in metaphysics' (Negri 1999, p. 305). Negri applies this idea first to Spinoza, arguing that 'Spinoza's true politics is his metaphysics' (Negri 1991, p. 217). In other words, Spinoza's politics are to be found not in the formative *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* or in the incomplete *Political Treatise*, but in the *Ethics*, in the description of modal life. Later, in *Insurgencies*, he argues that Marx's politics, his understanding of democracy, is to be found in his mature works, in *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*, specifically in the theory of living labour. Living labour, in positing the constitution of the world, is simultaneously Marx's politics and metaphysics. For more on Negri's reading of the relationship between politics and metaphysics, and how it relates to Althusser's idea of philosophical practice, see Read 2007.

6 Bosteels 2011, p. 47.

7 Althusser 1997, p. 7.

its primary critical target is the anthropological and teleological conception of God, 'that God himself directs all things to some certain end'. Spinoza has already, in Part One, developed an alternative ontology, one which posits God as the immanent cause of nature, as a power already actualised in nature, leaving no room for God acting miraculously with an end in view. However, it is not enough to simply dispense with this image, to confront it speculatively, as the true opposes the false, but its genesis must be critically articulated. Doing so necessitates an understanding of human thought and desire, 'even if it is not the place to deduce these things from the nature of the human mind' (EIApp). Such a critique is pre-emptive, at least partly so, in that it begins to develop the theory of the *conatus* and the conditions of knowledge prior to the demonstration of the property of the mind and desire in Parts Two and Three. This apparent disorder, in which polemic gets ahead of, and is thus separable from, argument, reveals itself to be a different order, a different practice of philosophy: critique cannot be separated from construction, *pars destruens* from *pars construens*.⁸

As I have already noted, this pre-emptive critique takes as its foundation 'what everyone must acknowledge', that people are ignorant of the causes of things but conscious of their appetite, their tendency to seek their own advantage. This foundation explains the apparent facticity of freedom, that we experience no compulsion, no necessity, when we decide to do this or that.⁹ For Spinoza, this fact is a fundamental prejudice, and not a fundamental axiom; it is a necessary limited perspective of ourselves and our relation to the world. This prejudice leads to a view in which the entirety of the world is viewed in terms of its relation to final causes, to human purposes. The individual who believes him- or herself to be free constitutes a world, a world seen as made up of objects that advance or hinder our desires, and are seen as intrinsically good or bad. This judgement comes prior to our understanding. God enters the picture as a supplement to this limited grasp of the world: when nature helps or limits my intentions, it appears as if I am the beneficiary or victim of some other intention, some divine intervention.¹⁰ It is possible to call this, following Althusser, a 'spontaneous philosophy' in that it is based less on an explicit doctrine or text than on the immediate practical comportment of individuals.¹¹ This philosophy starts with the individual, with the subject,

8 Negri argues that Spinoza's thought is one in which the critical dimension, *pars destruens*, is immediately constructive, *pars construens*, constructing a new ontology and politics (Negri 1991, p. 84).

9 Citton 2006, p. 14.

10 Bove 1996, p. 177.

11 The term 'spontaneous philosophy' is developed by Althusser in his course for scientists,

seen as independent of all other causes and relations. God (or perhaps even the gods) is simply that point where this individual, this particular appetite, confronts a world that unexpectedly frustrates or assists its particular striving. This individual acts with an end in view, attempting to realise his or her desire. Things in the world, objects, are interpreted according to this intention, 'they believe all things have been made for their sake', understanding them as 'good' or 'bad' in terms of how they help or hinder these intentions. Ultimately, the things that help or hinder these individual intentions are seen to be the product of another intention, another will, however mysterious. Intention, appetite, and desire form the grid of intelligibility of the world. 'And since they had never heard anything about the temperament of these rulers, they had to judge it from their own' (EIApp). The gods, or God, emerge from this as a projection of the individual's intention reflecting its constitutive limits, the impossibility of making sense of the world according to one's conscious appetite.

Once this idea of God emerges from an ignorance of the world, from a world seen under the illusion of finalism, of ends and values, it has its effects on knowledge and action.¹² The effect becomes a cause. Spinoza makes the distinction between prejudice (*praejudicia*) and superstition (*superstitio*), the first of which defines this initial ignorance of the causes of things, including our desire, while the second refers to this ignorance as it is reinforced by its social dimension, by a doctrine of ignorance and a practice of belief.¹³ Prejudice is transformed into superstition once the social dimension enters this horizon of ignorance and desire, once this belief in final causes becomes something that people try to exploit and develop, convincing others of their interpretation.

Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists'. In that text, Althusser uses the term the obviousness or naturalness of certain ideological conceptions despite the fact that they are created, the product of history. As Pierre Macherey clarifies: 'The spontaneous is never but a "spontaneous" in scare quotes, that is to say a false spontaneity which is in reality the result of a manipulation, an artifice, an editing' (Macherey 2009a, p. 21). It is possible to argue, as I am suggesting here, that the Appendix to Part One of the *Ethics* is the first critique of the spontaneous philosophy of theology.

- 12 Alexandre Matheron has coined the term 'finalism' to refer to this idea, outlined in the Appendix, that objects have their intrinsic values, are good or bad in themselves. As Matheron argues, stressing the radical nature of this critique, in that the terms given here, the free subject and world of objects, defines much of metaphysics as well as theology (Matheron 1969, p. 107).
- 13 As Pierre Macherey argues, the Appendix can be understood as something of a practical demonstration of the implications of EIIP36: 'Inadequate and confused ideas follow with the same necessity as adequate or clear and distinct ideas' (Macherey 1998a, p. 206).

The priority is less a temporal one, positing a history of religion in which the ignorance of individuals is socially organised into religion, than a logical one, whereby superstition rests on the inadequate nature of finite knowledge, and ultimately on finitude itself.

The argument of the Appendix demonstrates how an image of ourselves (and the world) emerges from our particular activity, our particular striving in the world, and in turn acts on the world. Finalism, the idea of a world structured in terms of means and ends, God, and the free subject, are initially effects of the limited grasp of the world, of the ignorance of the causes of things, but they become causes in turn. Spinoza writes: 'This doctrine concerning the end turns Nature completely upside down. For what is really a cause, it considers as an effect, and conversely' (EIApp). What he is referring to here is the way in which final causes, desires and intentions are, in every theology and metaphysics, made to be explanatory causes of the world, when they are nothing but effects. Final causes are not the origin of the world, but are an effect of a particular way of viewing the world, a particular temperament. This effect in turn acts as a cause, reproducing itself as a particular temperament and way of thinking. The anthropological-theological perspective (and its various offshoots) views effects as causes, but superstition as a practice is an effect that becomes a cause. The imaginary causality becomes the real condition of effects.¹⁴ Prejudice (the inability to grasp the causes of the world) is its foundation, but becomes its effect as it argues against any attempt to understand the world, to grasp the actual conditions for action and knowledge, insisting on a reduction to final causes, to ignorance.¹⁵ Nature, the temperament that functions as a cause, is eventually produced as an effect, as a habit. Against a doctrine that makes effects into causes, it becomes necessary to grasp everything, including this doctrine, as simultaneously an effect and a cause (EIP36).¹⁶ The perspective that converts effects into causes must itself be understood as both an effect, of ignorance, and a cause, of servitude.¹⁷ (As we shall see, this theme of inversion

14 Bove 1996, p. 216.

15 The connection between nature, temperament (*ingenium*), and habit, is made clearer if one inflects the Appendix through the *Theological-Political Treatise*. These two works are linked first and foremost through the idea of superstition, which becomes the explicit object of critique of the latter. They are also linked through a recognition of the artificial basis of nations, and political subjectivity. In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza stresses the role of habits and even rules, even over such mundane matters as diet and hair, in creating a political nature.

16 Montag 1999, p. 40.

17 Macherey 1998a, p. 238.

and reversal, of effects taken as causes, is integral to transindividual critique, emerging again with both Hegel and Marx).

The word, or concept, which expresses this particular intersection of effects becoming causes is *ingenium*, often translated as temperament, or even character.¹⁸ As a word, *ingenium* is awkwardly situated between effect and cause, nature and culture; developing its sense in Spinoza entails less its citation as a word, always a problematic enterprise when it comes to his work, which offers radical redefinitions of desire, God, nature, etc., than developing its function, its effects, which pass through the related words and concepts of nature, education, and desire. First, it should be noted that the term, and its related rethinking of nature and education, crosses from the individual to the collective.¹⁹ In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza writes: 'nature creates individuals, not nations, and it is only the difference of language, of laws, and of established customs that divides individuals into nations'.²⁰ The *Theological-Political Treatise* offers a sustained account of the customs and habits that constitute a nation, first through the singular case of the ancient Hebrew State, and then through a series of examples that includes everything from the laws of circumcision to the ponytails of 'the Chinese'.²¹ What becomes clear if one constructs the concept from these various instances and examples is that it is less and less a matter of the nation being constructed from individuals, as if the latter could constitute the elementary building block of the former, but more of individuals and nations constituted of the same fundamental relations, specifically affects, habits, and desires.²² This can be seen in the example of superstition, which is nothing less than an attempt to construct an imagination of the individual that reproduces that of the state, that thinks the same things, desires the same things, responds to the same signs, has the same fears and desires. It

18 *Ingenium*, or temperament, is given at several points in the Appendix as the ground of that judgement or evaluation, which sets up god and man in specular identification. As Spinoza writes with respect to the gesture of projection, from an inadequate idea of the human body to an inadequate idea of God that constitutes anthro-theological imaginary: 'they necessarily judge the temperament of the other from their own temperament' [ex suo ingenio ingenium alterius necessario judicant]. As Balibar writes, 'By ingenium, we should understand a memory whose form has been determined by the individual's experience of life and by his or her various encounters, and which, as a result of the unique way in which it has been constituted, is inscribed both in the mind (or soul) and in the dispositions of the body' (Balibar 1998b, p. 29).

19 Moreau 1994, p. 379.

20 Spinoza 2001, p. 200.

21 Spinoza 2001, p. 46.

22 Bove 1996, p. 208.

constitutes an 'I', an individual, which is nothing other than a reflection of the 'we'. However, such a project is fundamentally doomed, the imagination of each individual is too variable, too subject to the vicissitudes of experience and history, to be a stable basis for political order.²³ Ingenium, nature or temperament, individuates both the nation and the individual, but it does not make either an effect of the other, producing a state which is nothing other than the sum total of individual desires or an individual that is nothing other than an effect of its nation. Instead ingenium demonstrates that the individuation of individuals and collectives are made up of the same material, affects, desires, and ideas, and virtually the same process, the constitution of a memory, of habit. The various political regimes are not just relations between individuals, but regimes of individuation: tyranny is inseparable from the production of ignorance and fear, of superstition, just as democracy is inseparable from the production of rationality.²⁴

The inversion of superstition, in which effects become causes, reinforcing themselves, not only inverts the world, producing a fundamental misunderstanding, but it changes its sense. From the immanent terrain of desire and knowledge, the attempt to act and make sense of the world (however mistaken), transcendence or at least an idea of transcendence is produced: a God stands above the world.²⁵ It is what Frédéric Lordon and André Orléan call 'immanent transcendence': this term posits transcendence as nothing other than the effect of immanence, of desires, practices, and knowledge, but as an effect which in turn has effects.²⁶ Transcendence is constructed on this terrain, but it is not a mere illusion, a mere image. Transcendence, the image of God, and the idea of free will have real effects, shaping actions and desires. Spinoza makes a distinction between prejudice and superstition, between the original opacity of the immediate and the reinforced reduction to ignorance, but one passes almost imperceptibly from one into the other, as causes become effects and particular comportments and ways of viewing the world are reproduced.²⁷ Lordon and Orléan's reading crosses the divide between Althusser, who sees the imagination as a mere effect of practices, a precursor of ideological dom-

23 Spinoza 2001, p. 3.

24 Bove 1996, p. 258.

25 Matheron 1969, p. 348.

26 Lordon and Orléan 2008, p. 246.

27 'The *Ethics* combines two correlative approaches: first, to relate the whole system of anthropomorphic and teleological illusions which naturally result from ignorance of natural causes, to the standpoint of the "vulgar"; and second, to explain the necessity of this standpoint in an anthropological way' (Balibar 1994, p. 10).

ination, and Negri, who understood the imagination as constitutive power. Immanent transcendence is the point where causes become effects, and vice versa.²⁸

The Appendix then offers not just a critique of a particular conception of God, the universe, and the individual, but an explanation of this conception, drawing from certain anthropological postulates, and political structures. This intertwining of an ontological argument, regarding the origin of the world, its structuring order, with a philosophical anthropology and a political critique of religion is the source of both the strengths of this passage, its reverberations as a theory of ideology, and its occasional dismissal as merely a polemic, separate from the 'actual' argument of the *Ethics*.²⁹ However, these same three elements, ontology, anthropology, and politics, or sociality, are repeated in Spinoza's constructive theory, the development of the *conatus* and theory of the affects. Which is not to suggest that there is a rigid separation between the pre-emptive critique and the positive theory. As much as Spinoza declares in the Appendix that 'it is not the place to deduce these things from the nature of the human mind', working from a foundation that everyone must acknowledge, namely the consciousness of appetite and 'ignorance of the causes of things', his own demonstration of the human mind (and body) repeats these same basic points: consciousness of desire and the striving for preservation are the fundamental elements of both inadequate and adequate knowledge of human existence. 'Consciousness of appetite' is as much a basic aspect of everyday consciousness as it is fundamental insight into the nature of consciousness and desire. In terms of both the critique of individualism and the development of a transindividual concept of individuation, the *pars destruens* and *pars construens* that overlap and inform each other, the stakes are ultimately ontological, anthropological, and political.

28 For a justification of the term 'immanent transcendence', see Lordon and Orlean 2008, p. 246. Negri has insisted that the emphasis on the constitutive dimension of theology, its constitution of practices and a world, is what distinguishes Spinoza's critique from the generic enlightenment critique. 'The instrumental paradox of the "libertine" critique of religion is accepted here (imagination is illusion) in the inverted form that really constitutes it (and illusion constitutes reality). But the Spinozian inversion of the constitutive function evades the skeptical danger and every skeptical temptation. Constitutive activity in fact, is not a simple political function, it is not double truth; it is, rather, ontological power' (Negri 1991, p. 95).

29 Gilles Deleuze has perhaps done the most to develop the idea of Spinoza's voices, the different tones and significations that separate the polemics of the scholia and appendix from the order of propositions and demonstrations (Deleuze 1997, p. 146).

The starting point for any positive thought of individuation, of transindividual individuation, in Spinoza is the formulation, 'Desire is the very essence of man in so far as his essence is conceived as determined to any action from any given affection of itself' (EIIiAffD1). This definition of the essence of man, which appears in Part III, follows a series of propositions in which the definition of man is separated from substance, from any individual essence. There is no substantial identity of humanity (EIIPI0). In its place humanity must be thought of as a relation.³⁰ First and foremost as the relation to the body, which constitutes the primary idea of the mind (EIIPI1). The body is itself nothing other than a particular relation of motion and rest, a particular capacity to affect and be affected. The body is constantly undergoing transformations, increasing and decreasing its capacity to act, and gaining and losing its component dimensions. These transformations are matched on the side of thought, which is constantly reflecting and acting on these transformations, as ideas are shaped by (and shape) these encounters and increases and decreases of power. The essence of a given individual is not a substance, or a form; it is nothing other than the striving, the conscious desire to preserve itself, to preserve a particular relation, in its myriad transformations. Desire is man's essence: the formulation is as much a redefinition of essence, stressing that it exists in relation, as it is redefinition of desire, as singular striving rather than lack.³¹

The general definition of desire, the conatus, and the affects repeats and explicates what was seized [*capiam*], simply asserted, in the Appendix. What was initially presented as an inadequate knowledge, as the basis of an imaginary apprehension of existence, now becomes an adequate idea, which is the precondition for other adequate ideas. Consciousness of our desire is not a random fact of existence, something that we may or may not be conscious of, but is integral to consciousness, and self-consciousness, itself. Striving is not some blind force, some id outside of consciousness, but is integral to thought. As Spinoza states, desire is 'appetite together with consciousness of the appetite' (EIIIP9S). Striving determines mind and body. We are compelled not just to act according to our desires, but to think as well: 'we imagine those things

30 Spinoza's denial of any substantial definition to man, 'The being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man or substance does not constitute the form of man' (EIIPI0), has fueled accusations of 'acosmism'. The flipside of this is a strong tendency towards nominalism, of singular things, in which all that exists is the individual. Spinoza asserts simultaneously that all is substance and that all is individual, making possible the assertion 'Substance, that is individuals'. Or, as Vittorio Morfino has argued, substance is perhaps best thought of as nothing other than relation (Morfino 2014, p. 58).

31 Balibar 1997b, p. 4.

that increase or aid the body's power of acting' (EIIIP12). Second, the causes that 'all men are born ignorant of' are not just the causes of this or that thing, of the tiles that fall from the roof or the wind that blows, they are ultimately, but not exclusively, the causes of desire, the obscure conditions that determine us to want this or that. Spinoza's definition of desire expands upon what is immediately given, or seized, in the Appendix. In doing so it provides the conditions for going beyond it, for exploring the affects and relations that determine desire.

Desire is always determined; it is always a desire for something, always a particular desire. At the same time, there is no *telos*, no pre-established goal, for this desire, no greater good that all automatically strive for, even the preservation of life is too undefined to constitute a common object of desire.³² These two statements do not contradict each other; it is because desire is by definition intransitive, without a specified object, that its objects are shaped and formed by history. Spinoza is quick to point out the sheer plurality of human desires: the drunk who desires drink, the ambitious man who desires glory, the philosopher who desires wisdom, all have to be considered as singular modes of desiring and existing, as essences. The plurality of different essences is not simply given, it is not a 'spiritual animal kingdom' of different natures, but it reflects the way in which these different natures have been determined, affected. All striving, all desire, is doubly determined: determined to preserve and maintain itself, and determined by its particular affects, its objects and history.³³

The primary affects, joy and sadness, make possible love and hate. Love and hate are defined as nothing other than 'joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause', for the former, and 'sadness with the accompanying idea of external cause', for the latter (EIIIP13S). The ideas of love and hate begin to constitute objects, objects that are defined not by any of their intrinsic qualities (they are not good or bad), but by their relations. What causes joy or sadness does so solely because something is perceived to be the cause of my joy or sadness. Whether the perceptions reflect some quality of the object, its capacity to actually cause pain or pleasure, or some purely contingent or imagined aspect, is beside the point. Whatever causes joy is loved, and vice versa, rightly or wrongly. There is thus an irreducible historical dimension to the affects, objects that are perceived as the cause of joy or sadness become objects of love and hate: this history determines the object, giving it qualities, and desire, giving

32 Balibar 1998b, p. 107.

33 Macherey 1995, p. 111.

it goals to strive towards. As Spinoza writes, 'it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it' (EIIIP9s). The object and individual are constituted by their history. Thus, there are as many affects as there are objects, love and hate are purely nominalist terms that reflect a plurality of possible objects (EIIIP56), and, conversely, there are as many affects as there are individuals. The affects individuate both the 'object' – the thing (or person) loved or hated – and the 'subject' – the person loving, hating, hoping, fearing, etc. The multiplicity of different affects, different loves and hatreds, and different individuals would seem to tend towards an absolute nominalism, a world of singular loves and hatreds. However, beyond the primacy of the singular object or the individual, what Spinoza's text affirms first and foremost is the primacy of relations, the similar structuring principles: that is why the affects are defined twice, first in terms of the relations that constitute them, and secondly in terms of their generic definitions.³⁴

Spinoza can be understood to be offering a critique of both the idea of a subject, understood as a universal capacity of will and knowledge, and an object understood as a thing made of determined, intrinsic qualities.³⁵ In the first case, that of the subject, we have instead the *conatus* which does not exist outside of its particular determinations, its particular striving.³⁶ There is no will in general, just specific acts of willing. While in the second, the object, the thing, has to be viewed in terms of its history, its affections and associations.³⁷ It would appear, at least initially, that this relational dimension would apply only to inadequate ideas, ideas in which situation and circumstances, effects and causes, are muddled. Such ideas give us not so much an object, but a confused encounter between our body and another body in which it is impossible to determine where one ends and another begins. As we will see, however, adequate ideas are no less relational, are common.³⁸ The difference is not between what is relational and confused, and singular and adequate, but rather in how the relations are determined or grasped: according to 'the common order of nature', or according to their internal conditions of causal production.³⁹ The concepts of subject and object are, like the universal and tran-

34 Macherey 1995, p. 189.

35 Matheron 1969, p. 105.

36 Lordon 2006, p. 150.

37 Bove 1996, p. 50.

38 Sévérac 2005, p. 215.

39 Sévérac 2005, p. 109.

scendent ideas, too broad and imprecise, and must be replaced by the actual conditions and relations that constitute the specificity of a given conatus, a given striving, or a singular thing.

The overlapping constitution of objects and subjects, of things and desires, can perhaps be best seen in the 'imitation of affects'. This imitation crosses the divide that separates subjects and objects, imagination and reason, taking on different modalities and relations. The ground of this imitation is given in the imagination, in the fact that we 'imagine a thing to be like us', from that initial similitude we then take on the affects of this similar thing or person. As Spinoza initially defines this 'imitation':

This imitation of affects, when it is related to sadness is called pity; but related to desire it is called emulation, which, therefore, is nothing but the desire for a thing which is generated in us from the fact that we imagine others like us to have the same desire.

EIIIP27S

This imitation undoes the opposition of self and other, undoing the divide between ego-centrism and altruism, or self-interest and disinterest.⁴⁰ Pity is not a purely disinterested concern for another, but one of the many effects of the general tendency of the conatus to increase joy and decrease sadness.⁴¹ The image or idea of the other's sadness saddens me, pushing me to dispense with it. (Of course, pity is still grounded in sadness, in passivity, which is why Spinoza rejects it as a basis for ethics, but it cannot be grasped according to a rigid divide between self and other). Ambition, the striving that others desire what I desire, love what I love, also crosses the division between self and other. My affects are increased by the affects of others, by what they love. I want others to love what I love, and I love something more when it is loved by others. This relation is not a relation of recognition between subjects; it is not a relation between individuals qua individuals, but rather one between the constitutive transindividual conditions.⁴² I relate to others not as bounded totalities, as persons, but in and through the objects and affects that move them.

Ambition is the constitution of sociality, of society constituted by shared loves and hates, which is to say that it is a constitution of an object as much as a collective or individual desire.⁴³ If I desire that others love something that can-

⁴⁰ Matheron 1969, p. 164.

⁴¹ Lordon 2006, p. 153.

⁴² Balibar 1994, p. 27.

⁴³ In the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza writes: 'Since men, as we have said, are led more by

not be shared, as in the case of a possessive lover, then my desire that others love it will be as much a source of conflict as agreement. Thus, 'while they rejoice to sing the praises of the thing they love, they fear to be believed' (EIVP37S1). Thus, in ambition we see two of the defining characteristics of Spinoza's account of the affects: imitation and vacillation. Affects constitute collectivities, objects, and individualities, but they do so ambivalently, defining the common terrain that constantly divides between love and hatred, agreement and conflict. Ambivalence is not due to some instability of the affects themselves, but to the fact that the same thing, the same object or person, is often the cause of both joy and sadness, hope and fear. Our affective relations are ambivalent, complicated by the fact that what is the cause of joy is often the cause of sadness, and whatever we love is often loved or hated by someone else.⁴⁴ The complexity of things and the historicity of encounters inscribe a sadness in the heart of joy and a hatred at the core of love. The vacillation of the affects is an effect of difference over time and space; it stems from the fact that relations are primary to objects or subjects.

The relation of the affects, with their various imitations and vacillations, offers the clearest illustration of the transindividual constitution of individuality and collectivity in Spinoza: it is through the affects that we can see that the individual, both the individual person and object, cannot be separated from relations with others, nor can the collective, nation or class, be thought of as anything other than a particular relation of strivings. However, it would appear that sociality is identified primarily with passivity, with determination by others, and activity with individuality, with autonomy. This would seem to be the sense of one of the opening definitions, which identifies freedom as something acting from its own nature, and determination by another as compulsion (EID7). It is possible to read Spinoza this way, and the figures of the sage would seem to suggest an 'ethics' of extricating oneself from the connections and relations with others, thus reading Spinoza according to a long-standing tradition which has equated the affects (or emotions) with collectivity and reason with individuality, the madness of crowds and the solitary genius (ultimately mapping both onto the division between nature and culture). However, doing so obscures the novelty of Spinoza's particular thought of transindividuality. It could be argued that reading Spinoza according to the division between

passion than by reason, it naturally follows that a people will unite and consent to be guided as if by one mind not at reason's prompting but through some common emotion, such as a common hope, or common fear, or desire to avenge some common injury' (2000, p. 64).

44 Macherey 1995, p. 195.

the individual and the collective, seeing him as either the champion of the individual versus collective, or vice versa, reflects more the dominance of this particular opposition within the history of philosophy than anything about his text.⁴⁵

In order to overcome this tendency it is necessary to think the way in which individuation and collectively are constituted in Spinoza, specifically the way in which affects and reason, passivity and activity, individuate both collectivities and persons, defining classes and nations as well as individual characteristics. We have already seen how the affects constitute the transindividual basis of collectivity and individuality; it remains to be seen how thought, reason, is also collective and individual. For Spinoza, the fundamental axiom of thought is not 'I think' but 'Man thinks: or, to put it differently, we know that we think' (EIIA2). Spinoza is as much a critic of the isolated individual thinker as of the separation of mind and body. Social relations, the presence of others, are not external to thought, but integral to its definition, genesis, and development. Understanding this entails returning to the conatus, to the striving that defines desire. Thought is not outside of this striving, as much as we strive to imagine those things that affirm our existence (EIIIP12). This proposition, like most that define the 'double determinations' of our striving, is fundamentally ambiguous: we strive to persevere in our being, but what we strive for or against is determined by our history of affects, ideas, and relations. What we think may aid us might not actually aid us, or may be harmful in the long run. It might cause joy now, only to cause sadness later. The mind is not outside of desire, outside of striving, and this active dimension explains both its error and its knowledge. Superstition and philosophy, inadequate and adequate ideas, have this in common; they are each attempts to affirm our existence, to increase our capacity to act. Thought is not outside of desire and social existence, but is internal to it.

45 Contemporary Spinoza scholarship is split between those who assert the irreducibly individual basis of the conatus, of the individual striving, and those who assert the primacy of the multitude, or nature, as a body encompassing all bodies. Balibar has argued that these interpretations crystallise around the line from the *Political Treatise* which describes 'the power of the multitude guided, as it were, by one mind' [potential multitudinis, quae una veluti mente ducitur] (Spinoza 2000, p. 48). Some, such as Lee Rice, see this as merely a metaphor, stressing the 'as if', while others, such as Negri and Matheron, argue that the multitude can be considered an individual in terms of its striving, conatus, and relations. Balibar's solution, consistent with his reading of Spinoza as a transindividual thinker, is to examine the mutual constitution of the individual and the multitude (Balibar 2005, p. 94).

Of course, this assertion of the fundamentally strategic nature of all thought, its immersion in the struggle to increase power, still remains primarily within the terrain of inadequate ideas, ideas which do not express their causes. Much of what we desire and avoid, strive for and flee from, is based on imagined causes (EIIIP51Schol). These objects, affects, are irreducibly collective in their orientation, objects of ambition. What about adequate ideas, however, those ideas that express their cause? Are they not individual, the products of a single mind, situated outside of the collective economy of ambition? Spinoza's use of the term 'common notions' suggests otherwise, that common notions are notions in common. All common notions, all ideas, inadequate and adequate, arise from the encounters of two bodies. Inadequate ideas fail to comprehend this relation, confusing the body affected with the body that is doing the affecting, seeing 'good' or 'bad' as an intrinsic quality of the object, rather than a product of our own determined relations with the object. Adequate ideas, common notions, begin to grasp this relation not as a muddled effect of an encounter, but instead comprehend the actual commonality, the actual relations that constitute the two bodies. This relational dimension of common notions deepens if we take into account one of the defining differences of inadequate and adequate ideas: the first are determined by the 'common order of nature', while the second are produced through the mind 'regarding a number of things at once' in order 'to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions' (EVP39S). Confused ideas and adequate ideas both entail relations, the difference is whether or not they express them, whether or not they grasp the actual basis of their relation, their common nature. The lowest order of knowledge, the ideas that define superstition, are seen as absolutely singular, left as objects of pure wonder (EIIIP52).⁴⁶ It is not just that ideas, inadequate or adequate, express relations, that there are relations internal to thought, but that these relations cannot be separated from social relations in general. For Spinoza, a body that has done many things, an individual that has experienced many things, is capable of more ideas, of more adequate ideas (EIIIP13S). The social dimension of common notions is foregrounded in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, not just in terms of its argument for the freedom to philosophise, but also in terms of its understanding of the constitutive nature of the social order for thought.⁴⁷

46 Sévérac 2005, p. 268.

47 Negri has stressed a constitutive and historical interpretation of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, in which the inadequate ideas of an anthropomorphic God, acting as legislator, produces the social order and stability necessary to produce reflection. As Negri writes,

Passivity and activity, affects and desire, imagination and reason, are the product of relations, since every affect, every idea, encompasses at least two 'things', two bodies, two affects. Moreover, every individual and every collective is nothing other than the combination of these relations, a relation of relations. In every individual, in every collectivity, there is a combination of inadequate and adequate ideas, common notions and affects. Individuation, of both the collective and the individual, is nothing other than the constitution, and destruction, of this particular relation of ideas, affects, and desires: the constitution of a particular *ingenium*. It is transindividual in that the ideas, the affects, and the striving, are neither strictly individual nor strictly collective: there is never a private desire, nor is there any affect, or idea, that would have any existence, any reality outside of being actively felt, thought, and desired by specific individuals. Ideas, affects, and desires exist at the intersection of the individual and the collective. It is for this reason that society, the state or nation, can be understood as being founded on communication, as being a particular mode of communication, a communication that constitutes and encompasses affects and reason.

Spinoza reflects on the intersections of imagination and reason, affect and intellect, in the constitution of the collective and the individual in at least two places. The first, as we have already seen, is in ambition. Ambition is the affective constitution of society, the desire that others love what I love, that others live according to my temperament [*ingenium*]. As such it is inseparable from the imagination, from the imaginary constitution of the other's desire and love. In and through ambition we constitute the image of the other, of 'men' [*homines*] in general, the generic image of others that functions as a guide for our actions and desires (EIIIP29).⁴⁸ It is no longer the love or hatred of this or that individual, or collection of individuals, that orients an individual's actions, but a generic idea, a kind of 'society effect'.⁴⁹ There are two limits to this affective constitution of ambition. First, at the level of sociality, and the conceptual grasp of social relations, 'men' is a universal. For Spinoza, all universals stem from the human body's finitude, it is affected by so many images that it can no longer grasp the singular differences (EIIIP40S). What is left then is a generic idea that

'Imaginative activity reaches the level of an ontological statute, certainly not to confirm the truth of prophecy but to consolidate the truth of the world and the positivity, the productivity, and the sociability of human action' (Negri 1991b, p. 98).

48 Macherey argues that there is a fundamental shift in EIIIP29: the desire to imitate others, or that others live according to our temperament shifts from specific encounters with a generic someone to 'men' or others (1995, p. 233).

49 Althusser 1970a, p. 66.

is produced by the inability to imagine all the myriad things, a universal that is always tainted by some particular content: some will imagine man as a rational animal, while others will think of a featherless biped.⁵⁰ The 'men' who we strive to act like, whose image governs our loves and hates, is a fiction, an unstable universal that is imagined differently by different individuals. It is as much a condition of discord as harmony. Second, there is a problem at the level of the object of this sociality, that which we want others to love or hate. We desire that others love what we love, the love (or hatred) we feel is strengthened by the idea that others love what we love. This ambition becomes a source of conflict especially if the object that we desire is subject to the rule of scarcity, and thus cannot be possessed by all equally.⁵¹ Ambition is thus internally conflicted. As Spinoza writes, 'those who love are not of one mind in their love – while they rejoice to sing the praises of the thing they love, they fear to be believed' (EIVP37S1). The constitution of society through ambition is inherently contradictory, the very things that draw people together, the desire to love as others love and to have others love what I love, divide them as well. As conflicted as this sociality is, it is a sociality, which is to say that the ambivalence of ambition is not a remnant of the state of nature, but a product of sociality itself.⁵²

Society, or, as Spinoza puts it, the city, is not exclusively founded on the ambivalent sociality of the passions. It is also founded on reason, on the powers of the intellect. It is the same *conatus*, the same striving, underlying reason and ambition. In each case there is a striving to make the temperament of the individual coincide with others, to constitute a collective temperament that would reflect the individual. However, the essential difference is in how this relation to the other and the object is constituted. The rational constitution of the state is based on the recognition that it is more useful to live with others. This idea of man, of humanity, is not the idea of men constituted through the imagination; it is not the universal idea, but the utility of social relations.⁵³ It is not the desire that others live as I live, or that I co-ordinate my love and hates with others, but that humankind can accomplish more collectively than individually (EIVP35S). As Spinoza famously writes, 'nothing is more useful to

50 Sévérac 2005, p. 287.

51 In a market society, the common object of desire is no longer a singular thing, but money, which is qualitatively the same while being quantitatively limited (Orlean 2008, p. 73).

52 Balibar 1998b, p. 95.

53 The universal idea of 'man' is passive, a product of the excess of images over the imagination's capacity, while the second is active, it is produced by the mind's activity, it is produced by the intellect, relating back to that activity as its condition and effect (Matheron 1969, p. 72).

man than man' (EIVP37S2). This idea of man does not produce the ambivalence that determines the affect of ambition. Individuals guided by reason actually agree with each other, add and assist each other, rather than strive to orient their actions around an impossible object of what the others want. Moreover, reason as an object of desire is truly common; not only can it be shared by all, but its worth increases with the number of people who participate in it (EIVP36).⁵⁴ Reason is not scarce, not finite, and is actually increased by others thinking the same thing. Men under the guidance of reason can overcome the contradictions of ambition and actually desire that others desire what they desire.

These two different foundations of the city, these two different geneses of sociality, one based on the affect of ambition and the other based on reason, are not two different options: there is not a city of affects and a city of reason supplanting each other as two different phases, two different orders. Spinoza's text presents them as two different demonstrations of the same thing, suggesting the coexistence of these two different constitutions of society. As Balibar writes, 'Sociability is therefore the unity of a real agreement and an imaginary ambivalence, both of which have real effects'.⁵⁵ We are always dealing with both affects, with ambition, and reason, with a city founded on a projection of our ideas of man, and a city founded on our rational utility. While there is no telos, no necessary progression by which the city founded on reason (a democracy) necessarily displaces a city founded on superstition and affects, that does not mean that the relation is entirely static. The particular combination of reason and affects defines the nature of a given city, and its particular history. There is no more one generic essence of the city's striving than there is an essence of man's singular striving. The striving, the particular relations that constitute the city, the collective, must be thought from the singular case, from the specific way it is affected and determined.⁵⁶ There is thus a history, but this history must be thought from the singular case, from the particular way in which any given city combines ambition and reason, affects and knowledge.

54 It is for this reason that Negri argues that Spinoza's politics can be understood as being based on the construction of the common rather than the universal (Negri 2010, p. 136).

55 Balibar 1998b, p. 88.

56 Étienne Balibar has argued that the *Theological-Political Treatise* offers a dialectical understanding of the constitution of society in which the abstract and indeterminate presentation of the 'pact', the social contract, is concretised by the various affective investments and imaginary constitutions of society. Like desire, the social contract only exists in its concrete instances: 'The pact only exists as specified by its historical circumstances: there are as many real states as there are forms of pact' (Balibar 1997a, p. 176).

Ambition and reason are two different ways of the community preserving itself, just as affects and reason, appetite and desire, are two different ways of the individual preserving him- or herself. That there is an overlap between the individual and the collective, the self and the city, is not surprising. After all, as we have seen with the idea of temperament [*ingenium*], the individual and the collective are constituted through the same basic relations, affects, ideas, and desires. However, such an understanding of society risks eclipsing the very transindividual relation that we are seeking, in that it risks making the individual nothing other than an effect of the city, the same affects, the same ideas, on a smaller scale, or, conversely, it makes the city nothing other than the projection of the different institutions that constitute it.⁵⁷ Spinoza underscores the impossibility of this in at least two places. First, it is impossible to constitute a city entirely founded on superstition, on the imagination and the affects. To do so would require the total control of the experiences and ideas of all the individuals, to make all of their imaginary associations and affective vacillations the same as the social imaginary.⁵⁸ Right is coextensive with power, and every state must confront the irreducible singularity of the conatus, of desires and ideas. There is an irreducible gap between the character, the *ingenium*, of the individual and that of the collective. Attempting to annul it only makes it more powerful. Second, and conversely, a city entirely founded on rationality is also impossible. The idea of such a city overlooks the finitude of man, the inability to know or control the future. Between these two extremes, between the constitution of total imaginary subjection and a free society of sages, states and individuals are constituted as a combination of affective and rational aspects.

Spinoza's critical transindividual perspective begins by demonstrating that the idea of an autonomous individual is itself the product of an originary ignorance. Human beings are not a 'kingdom within a kingdom', but continuously affect, and are affected by, their relations with others and the world. This ontological or anthropological critique of the independent individual is followed by a political or social analysis that illustrates how it is that affects, imagination, and reason constitute every individual and collective. The affects and intellect, imagination and reason, combine in every individual and collective, but they do so differently in different historical moments. At the level of the collective, the political systems of tyranny and democracy constitute two poles, one dominated by superstition, the other by the circulation of ideas; while

57 Citton and Lordon 2008, p. 30.

58 Spinoza 1991, p. 3.

at the level of the individual, these poles are represented by ambition, the ambivalent desire to have others love what one loves, and reason, the recognition that human beings are useful precisely in term of their differences.⁵⁹ Spinoza does not simply present a critique of individuality, demonstrating it to be a flawed perspective on the world, but demonstrates how this perspective emerges from conditions that are both anthropological and historical. Spinoza gives an account of the transindividual genesis of not only the individual, but also the inadequate idea that the individual has of its own individuation. Ultimately, Spinoza demonstrates how this inadequate idea of individuation, like the affects and imagination from which it stems, is as much a part of social relations as the interconnecting affects of desire and knowledge that make up social life.

Hegel

In shifting our attention from Spinoza to Hegel, the obvious place to begin would seem to be Hegel's formulation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that 'Self-consciousness is desire itself'.⁶⁰ Such an assertion crosses the same terrain as Spinoza's articulation of conatus, essence, desire and consciousness, making it the point of both proximity and difference. Once this formulation is coupled with Hegel's subsequent statement that 'Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness', it is possible to see the strong transindividual basis of Hegel's understanding of desire, a transindividual conception that can be juxtaposed to Spinoza's.⁶¹ In each case, desire, consciousness, and relations are combined in a redefinition of thought and existence that can be defined as transindividual.

The two statements cited above, and the dense logic which connects them, are found in the passage known as 'Lordship and Bondage', or the Master/Slave dialectic. This passage is perhaps the most well-known of all of Hegel's writings, and this notoriety, along with the tendency to treat it as a separate treatise on humanity and politics, poses several problems. First, there is the difficult question of its place within the logic of the *Phenomenology* itself. The section on 'self-consciousness' marks the transition from consciousness, the attempts to know an object, to Reason on the path to spirit. For Hegel, consciousness

59 Balibar 2008, p. 84.

60 Hegel 1977, p. 109.

61 Ibid.

cannot grasp itself as some other thing in the world, nor can it simply be a meta-reflection, consciousness of consciousness.⁶² It thus requires a transindividual dimension, a constitutive dimension of relations. The presence of the transindividual dimension raises questions about the role of sociality in Hegel's thought. Secondly, it marks the first place where concrete figures and a quasi-historical content enter into the *Phenomenology*. The fact that Hegel could be talking about 'masters' and 'slaves', as well as some forgotten historical moment of domination, not to mention the way in which the passage includes work, death, as well as desire, opens up the possibility of a historical or anthropological reading of this passage.⁶³ This is the possibility actualised by Alexandre Kojève, whose powerful but interrupted reading of this passage is incredibly influential, defining a central passage in the history of twentieth-century philosophy. Kojève's interpretation shifts the passage from its place within the development of the *Phenomenology* to a set of questions about the role of desire, work, and death in the constitution of human existence and history. Kojève's influential reading is interrupted because it more or less starts and begins with this passage, making provisional statements in a dialectical development of statements into independent theses and conclusions. The limitations of this anthropological reading must be traversed rather than avoided, since they are all drawn from the aspects that constitute so much of the passage's appeal, and influence, for rethinking relations. The passage is situated between the anthropological invariants that illustrate it and the dialectical presentation that animates it.

In its presentation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the passage on the master and slave is situated between consciousness and self-consciousness.⁶⁴ Consciousness, the reflection on an object, loses itself in the object, revealing nothing of its nature. In contrast to this, self-consciousness must be active; this is the fundamental engagement with desire. Desire, for this or that thing, for food or water, reveals very little, only that self-consciousness is a living thing. The object still asserts its independence, its contingency, as these desires are satisfied only to return again. The desire for another self-consciousness, what many call recognition, asserts itself here as the problem of a specific human self-consciousness, which must be grounded on a particular kind of desire, a desire for recognition rather than a simple appetite. It is worth pausing to reflect that this distinction, between appetite as a desire for the basic objects

62 Pippin 2010, p. 15.

63 Jameson 2010, p. 89.

64 Pippin 2010, p. 15.

of survival, such as food and water, and desire as a desire for recognition, as a desire that can only complete itself in another consciousness, is absent from Spinoza's thought, for whom appetite and desire were simply two different expressions of the same fundamental striving. Thus, it is possible to see why and how Hegel's text has been read as an anthropology, or even an anthropogenesis, an account of the emergence of human desire from animalistic needs.⁶⁵ It is important not to overstate the difference between Hegel and Spinoza, however, and recognise that Hegel's concept of desire follows a brief explication of the self-differentiating nature of life; it is a becoming conscious of life, life becoming for itself.⁶⁶ It is not a matter of a radical break between human and animal desire, or of a fundamental continuity, but of identity and difference, an identity and difference that is traversed in its becoming conscious.

Hegel's passage considers the various possibilities of this desire for recognition, its constitutive ambiguities, in which recognition always passes through misrecognition. Once we pass the initial condition, where the struggle for recognition manifests itself in mutual annihilation, these possibilities manifest themselves first as their extremes, as master and slave: 'one being only recognized, the other only recognizing'. These positions do not just constitute two extremes on the pole of recognition, two extremes of this relation, but are immediately situated in the specific dialectic of the *Phenomenology* in which what is first taken to be true, what appears as such, ultimately undoes itself. It will prove that the master, who is recognised without recognising in turn, ultimately is a slave, entirely dependent on others; while the slave, who recognises without being recognised, is ultimately a master, creating her world. This passage undertakes a fairly standard dialectical transformation, or reversal, in which the truth of the situation is fundamentally different from what we first think it to be. Any attempt to subordinate this dialectic to teleology runs up against the problem that this dialectic takes two paths, or splits into two, as it were. First, its transformation passes through recognition, through the inter-subjective relation of master to slave, but it also passes through work and consumption, the relation to the material world. With respect to recognition, the master finds herself in a position that is the opposite of what was first intended. The master becomes a master through struggle, through the assertion that recognition, being seen as an independent consciousness, is more important than life, but ultimately finds herself recognised by one that she cannot recognise in turn. It might be possible to say that the opposite is true of the slave,

65 Kojève 1980, p. 7.

66 Russon 2001, p. 54.

namely that she first chooses life but ends up finding recognition through the master. However, such a neat reversal is not possible; the slave never receives recognition from the master. The dialectical reversal of this passage, the point where the master is revealed to be a slave, and vice versa, turns as much on the relation to the object as to the relation to the other: the master is a slave, not just because he is recognised by one who he cannot recognise, but because his relation to the object is as a pure object of desire, absolute mediation in its immediacy, while the slave works on the object. As Hegel writes, 'Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing'.⁶⁷ This work coupled with the fear of death proves to be another direction for recognition, at least in part: the slave is not recognised, but comes to recognise him- or herself through a world that is the product of labour. Labour constitutes another basis for recognition. Whereas the opening of the passage began with a rigid division between appetite and desire, between relations with the world of objects and the world of subjects, desire for things and desire for recognition, the overturning of the relation of master to slave obscures this very distinction. What is important to Hegel is less the sharp division between the desire for recognition, what we might want to call intersubjectivity, and the relation with things, and more the fundamental negation of one's determinate condition: to be recognised is to be seen as something more than this determinate existence, a point that can be arrived at through the instability of fear and the determination of work as much as it can through recognition.⁶⁸

Labour is the externalisation of self, the remaking of the world according to one's conception and ideas. It is the constitution of the world in one's image. However, Hegel's interest in work, an interest that runs throughout his philosophical system, exceeds this subjective dimension.⁶⁹ All work on an object must contend with the matter of that object, contending with its particular properties and qualities. These qualities present obstacles, obstacles that must be overcome. What the labour process shows us is that overcoming these obstacles is less a matter of a pure assertion over them, and more one of studying the qualities, subordinating oneself to them. One must subordinate oneself to nature, studying its processes and relations, in order to master it: teleology, the assertion of one's intentions and desires, and causality, the world it confronts, are intertwined dialectically.⁷⁰ Labour is not just one activity

67 Hegel 1977, p. 118.

68 Williams 2000, p. 66.

69 Lukács 1977, p. 329.

70 Lukács 1978, p. 54.

among others, but is the very model of dialectical action, an action that moves through its negation, the original ‘cunning of reason’. As Hegel writes in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*:

Reason is as cunning as it is mighty. Its cunning generally consists in the mediating activity which, while it lets objects act upon one another according to their own nature, and wear each other out, executes only its purpose without itself mingling in the process.⁷¹

Hegel completes this remark by invoking providence, God’s will in the world: providence, reason, and labour all tarry with the negative, have their effects on the world by engaging with what opposes them. Work transforms the world by first submitting itself to its structures and causal laws. This general structure of work will be complicated by the addition of the social dimension, the presence of others that every work situation entails, even if they are only internalised in tools and habits.

These two dimensions, that of recognition and work, can be understood as constituting two different philosophies of history: one dominated by the struggle for rights, for the legal structures of recognition, the other for the struggle over work, over its value and role in constituting society. It is thus possible to make such a distinction, positing anew the distinction between ‘right’ Hegelians, in this context advocates of democracy and recognition rather than defenders of the Prussian state, and left Hegelians, champions of the hidden work of labour that makes possible any master, from Marx to feminist critiques of housework. However, such a rigid distinction between recognition and labour overlooks the way in which each passes through the other: the struggle for recognition cannot entirely overlook the long history of the social question, of rights as they relate to work, conversely, there is no struggle for the status of work without the struggle of recognition.⁷² However, if we wrest these passages from their posthumous implication within a philosophy of history and view them synchronically, these two different transindividual individuations (we could say two different recognitions if the use of one word to traverse these two different senses did not complicate matters) make it possible to think of two different ways of overcoming the subjection of the slave. The first, recognition proper, is through what is traditionally understood as inter-

⁷¹ Hegel 1991b, p. 284. Pierre Macherey concludes his remarks on this passage by arguing that Hegel’s philosophy is a philosophy of labour (Macherey 2009b, p. 63).

⁷² Balibar 2009a, p. 140.

subjectivity, whereby I am recognised when another sees me as I see myself, understands my desires as valid. The second suggests that there is also a recognition of sorts in work, a process by which 'the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own'.⁷³ This is a fundamentally different sense of recognition, less through the intersubjective relation of individual to individual than through the way in which one sees oneself, one's labours and intentions, reflected back to them through objects and institutions. This fundamentally different, broader, conception of recognition will play an integral role in later sections of the *Phenomenology*, as well as the *Philosophy of Right*, suggesting a tension, even a contradiction, in what is often presented as a unified concept of recognition.⁷⁴

The split of the different relations, one with the other, the other with the object, has its effects on the master's situation as well, in terms of both its initial appearance and its eventual truth. If the slave can gain something like recognition, some sense of self as something other than or more than mere survival, from work, then the master's relation to the object must be explored as well. This opens up the question of what can only be referred to as consumption. The master's fate is to be recognised by one that he cannot recognise in turn, to be recognised by a slave. At first, the relation to the object proves to be different. As Hegel writes of the master:

What desire failed to achieve, he succeeds in doing, viz, to have done with the thing altogether, and to achieve satisfaction in the enjoyment of it. Desire failed to do this because of the thing's independence; but the lord who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing and has pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it.⁷⁵

It would at first appear that the master has won out in this respect, for he has placed the bondsman, or slave, between himself and the object: the slave does all the work; the master receives all of the enjoyment. However, this consumption leaves the master in an almost animalistic state with respect to desire, knowing only his hungers and thirsts and nothing of the world

73 Hegel 1977, p. 119.

74 Jameson 2010, p. 105.

75 Hegel 1977, p. 115.

around him. The master has become dependent, dependent on recognition from one that he cannot recognise, and his very fundamental desires, desires for food and shelter, reflect this dependence. The master has overcome the independence but not the contingency of the object. If self-consciousness is desire, not just desire in terms of its supposed essence, but also in the way that it is articulated and actualised in relations, then the master comprehends little of herself, neither her relations with others or with objects reveals her potential. Ultimately, it is the figure of the impoverished self-consciousness of the master and the revolutionary potential of the slave that make this passage so evocative, making possible its multiple reinterpretations and reinscriptions into the history of class struggle and colonial struggle.⁷⁶

There is an affective dimension to the second sense of recognition, the recognition through the relation with objects, which cannot be ignored. Work itself would not liberate the slave from an attachment to a determinate mode of life, to its animalistic existence if it was not coupled with fear. As Hegel writes,

Without the discipline of service and obedience, fear remains at the formal stage, and does not extend to the known real world of existence. Without the formative activity, fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become explicitly for itself.⁷⁷

This fear, the fear not of this or that thing but of death, the absolute master, is necessary to constitute the detachment from a determinate existence, from the slavish attachment to life. Fear expresses the uncertainty and contingency of this particular life, but the separation must become formative, it must be put to work. Fear and work constitute two sides of the same formative process, one affect and one activity, one negation and one affirmation. Fear is integral to the shaping of consciousness. This is less a theory of the affects, considered in their constitutive dimensions as lines, planes and bodies, than it is an investigation of one particular affect, fear, with one particular object, death. It is not a matter of the multiple ways of being affected, of being finite, but of death as finitude. This affect is not, as in Spinoza, a modification of desire, but rather its negation, a negation that must be internalised. It is important to remember that death appears twice in Hegel's dialectic of lordship and bondage; it appears first

76 This is perhaps the best way to interpret Kojève's influential interpretation. Despite its radically interrupted reading of the *Phenomenology* which focuses almost exclusively on this passage, it best understood the broad range of the passage's references to work, death, and struggle, making it a grid of intelligibility of not only Hegel's work, but of history itself.

77 Hegel 1977, p. 119.

as a failed negation, as a mutually assured destruction that leaves neither a master nor a slave, and second as the absolute master, as the fear of death.⁷⁸ The first is the natural negation of consciousness, its simple annulment, no better than life, natural life, the life of desire for food and shelter, in defining self-consciousness. In order for this to take place, negation must preserve itself, must be dialectical rather than natural, must be the fear of death not the mere annihilation of life. Negation, death, must be internal.

Hegel's assertion that 'Self-Consciousness is Desire' is as much a problem as it is a definition. It is a problem in that what shapes this self-consciousness takes will depend on how this desire is actualised in the world, its constitutive relations and practices. Thus, it can be said that human beings have histories rather than essences.⁷⁹ They have histories in the sense that the practical comportments one takes with respect to one's desires and actions determine and define one's consciousness. That Hegel's passage on 'Lordship and Bondage' can be told as a story with its beginning, narrative conflict, and dramatic third act reversal underscores this irreducible dimension. In this first case, history is simply biography, the events and actions of a life. However, as we shall see, the objects and relations that one engages with also have a history. The history of a life has a history that exceeds it, which will have profound effects for self-consciousness. This historical dimension of consciousness brings Hegel in proximity with Spinoza: for both thinkers, desire, self-consciousness, and the human essence define less an essence in the static sense, but a relation which is articulated in different situations and relations. However, as we shall see, the narrative direction of this history, its causality or telos, begins to separate the two as well.

As much as this passage from the *Phenomenology* can be understood as an account of the human condition, anthropogenesis, or as the template for a philosophy of history, it could also be understood as another critical account of transindividuality. It can be understood to be a critique of every would-be lord, every attempt to grasp the self outside of a constitutive relation with others (and with them the material basis of existence). The lord and bondsman, master and slave, can be understood critically as two different extremes of human existence: the master is symbolic of an attempt to live a life without attachment, as desire in its pure negative dimension; in contrast to this the slave is life in its materiality and particularity, this particular life without the capacity to act on or transform itself. One is without relations, the other is defined entirely

78 Butler and Malabou 2010, p. 36.

79 Pippin 2010, p. 86.

by his or her relations. Each of these proves to be untenable: the master's life proves to be more attached to existence than it would first appear, and the slave's life necessarily goes beyond its limited survival, projecting its consciousness through labour and work. (The mutual undoing of each of these figures of consciousness could also be understood as an assertion of the necessary unity of mind and body: the master initially tries to live only as mind, as consciousness, passing off all bodily engagement to the slave, while the slave lives as pure body. That each of these proves to be untenable could be understood as the assertion that human existence is necessarily mind and body, recognition and labour).⁸⁰ It would be more premature than pre-emptive to refer to this particular dialectical resolution as transindividual. It is more intersubjective, framed by recognition, by the particular relation between two consciousnesses, or by consciousness and its object, than by the relation between the individual/individuation and the relations that it constitutes and constitute it.⁸¹ As much as the dialectic of recognition and misrecognition splits in two, giving us the relation to the other and to work, suggesting that it is more than intersubjectivity that is at stake, the limit of any interpretation of Hegel that remains stuck on this passage is to reduce transindividuality to intersubjectivity. Such a reading reduces transindividuality to a binary relation of recognition or misrecognition.

Of course, Hegel's own text would perhaps stand as the clearest warning against such an interrupted reading. Hegel concludes this section not with anything resembling the end of history (as universal recognition or revolution), but with the figures of stoicism, scepticism, and unhappy consciousness. These can be read as failed revolutions, as ideologies in Kojève's sense, in which the conflict between slave and master, between natural determination and ethical freedom, is internalised, becoming a conflict between the empirically conditioned self and the transcendental thinking self.⁸² (After all, Hegel reminds us that stoicism was a belief system of emperors and slaves, reflecting in some sense a failure to actively engage in the world.)⁸³ More important than their historical background is their philosophical content. Stoicism and scepticism are both philosophical methods that posit an individual 'I' separate from its affections. In which case they are refusals of transindividuality. Transindividuality only unfolds in Hegel's *Phenomenology* as we move beyond recognition as recognition of the other, to the recognition of the self in not just an other, but

80 Butler and Malabou 2010, p. 20.

81 Balibar 1998a, p. 215.

82 Kojève 1980, p. 53.

83 Hegel 1977, p. 199.

in an entire culture and way of life, in the 'I' that is a 'We' and the 'We' that is an 'I'.⁸⁴ The 'I' that is a 'we' is Hegel's statement of transindividual individuation, but as such it is subject to the particular dialectical unfolding of recognition and misrecognition.⁸⁵ Thus, it is possible to read this trajectory as it passes through the ethical world, culture, enlightenment, and religion, all of which have to be understood as different figurations of collectivity and individuality, as much as figures of consciousness.⁸⁶ These different phases are different phases of alienation, of the separation, of the 'I' and the 'We'. A thorough account of all these different figurations and refigurations, and their logical and historical implications, is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is worth at least pausing at one of them before moving on to the *Philosophy of Right*.

The development of the different figures of spirit, of the different transindividual relations, follows a progression that could be described as one from 'substance' to 'subject'. Spirit, what Hegel defines as 'the ethical life of a nation', is first understood as something immediate, given in the form of received traditions and laws. It is ethical substance, a kind of second nature that appears not as the effect of actions and subjectivity, but as its condition. Initially, it appears as something opposed to subjectivity, to individuality, and action, but this initial, tragic division is eventually overcome as the laws and customs of collective life are brought in line with subjectivity and intentionality. This dialectical transformation is given two different figurations: the first, as framed in terms of an 'I that is a We and a We that is I', a recognition of the individual in the collective, and vice versa; the second is framed in terms of the work of all and each.⁸⁷ The division that we glimpsed in the section on Lordship and Bondage between recognition and externalisation is continued in the historical moments of spirit that follow it, as each become the question of the reconciliation of the spirit considered in terms of its 'spiritual dimensions', the culture and ethics of recognition and its material dimension, the works and actions of the individuals and community.⁸⁸ It is not just that the individual finds him- or herself at odds with the community, split between substance and subject, but that this division passes through actions and the institutions through which they are recognised.

The chapter dedicated to Culture in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* can be seen as continuing the division between action and recognition first glimpsed in

84 Hegel 1977, p. 110.

85 Balibar 2011, p. 240.

86 Jameson 2010, p. 11.

87 Hegel 1977, p. 252.

88 Balibar 2011, p. 278.

Lordship and Bondage, but in such a way that it prefigures the examination of the different individuations in the *Philosophy of Right*. With respect to the former, it continues the question of recognition, only now it is not a matter of being recognised by an other, but rather of how one's activity is recognised, becoming the work of all and each.⁸⁹ This introduces a second problem that will become more important in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, that of the practical dimension of action, the way in which it serves the interest of the individual concerned and the way in which it serves the greater good. In the section on Culture, the two figures of action are the pursuit of wealth and state power, the first initially appearing as the work of the individual, the second as the work of the collective. These two figures repeat, and solidify, the division we already glimpsed between the struggle for recognition and work, and foreshadow a central problem of the *Philosophy of Right*: the relation between particular interest and universal dependency, between the actions of the individual, their institution, and effects on others. Hegel's scenario presents us with two individuals, or individuations: the first is dedicated to the service of the state, the second to wealth. The conflict has to do with the way in which universality and individuality appear in each activity. At first it would appear that service of the state is 'simple substance' and 'universal work', a work in which individuality is suppressed in favour of the immediacy of the universal.⁹⁰ Wealth is the reverse of this; the enjoyment of the individual is immediate. As Hegel indicates, however, prefiguring his engagement with political economy in the *Philosophy of Right*, the pursuit of self-interest through work cannot help but 'produce universal labour and enjoyment for all'.⁹¹ Similarly, the selfless dedication to the state, to the universal interest, can appear as nothing other than the pursuit of one's individual interest. The duality of individual and universal, the individual in the universal and the universal in the individual, is not how things appear, however, to the particular consciousness involved. For each of these figures of consciousness, one appears as good, the other as bad. It is always possible to see each of these actions in antithetical ways: state power can appear as the true universal, or as an oppressive and indifferent rule that suppresses every individual, while wealth can likewise appear as either universal activity or selfish interest. It is possible to see in each of these activities either the universal or the individual, either something 'good', something through which subjectivity can recognise itself, or something 'bad', something hostile to itself and its

89 Balibar 2011, p. 271.

90 Hegel 1977, p. 301.

91 Lukács 1977, p. 172.

interest. The duality of the action concerned, wealth and state power as individual or collective, contrasts sharply with the singularity of the judgement, thus making it possible to see a critique of moralising understanding of action, framed in terms of the good and the bad, individuality or universality. In the passage on Culture in question, the simple opposition between state service as good and wealth as bad, or vice versa, eventually gives way to two different figures of consciousness: the first, the noble consciousness, sees the universal, or the identity of self and universal in every action, while the latter, the ignoble consciousness, sees only difference, the rift between the individual and the universal, the corruption of every action.⁹²

The passage on Culture reworks the initial split of recognition: recognition of the master becomes the service of state power, and recognition through work becomes the pursuit of wealth. Only now these two different recognitions are no longer simply the relation between one individual and another, between a master and a slave, or between an individual and an object, a slave and her work, but between a figure of individuation and the practices and institutions through which they act, namely the pursuit of wealth and state power. It is no longer a matter of how one individual relates to another, but how an individual understands her relations to society as such. Just as the 'I that is a We' is less a static identification than a process, one beset on all sides by misrecognition and alienation, the work of everyone and each is caught between its constitutive poles of collectivity and individuality. However, now this duality is split once again, 'One divides into two', between the particular and universal in each by the moment of judgement, which makes it possible to see the individual in the universal, and vice versa. Every action undertaken with others carries with it the irreducible element of that which is for itself, for the individual, and for others, for the universal. This passage thus foregrounds the centrality of the relation between action and its judgement and conceptualisation: it is always possible to see self-interest in every action (as Hegel reminds

92 Hegel 1977, p. 305. Hegel's section on Culture culminates with a discussion of language as a dialectic of the universal and the particular. Language appears first in the *Phenomenology* as universality. In the section on sense certainty, the very utterance of the words 'now' or 'this' to grasp the particular content of sense awareness immediately state a universality that is not intended. In the section on Culture, language is split between the identity of universality and particularity, in the case of the language of service, in which one is as good as one's word, and the language of flattery, in which nothing is what it seems, and one is always saying something different from what one intends. The first language, that of service, is the identity of the universal and particular; the second, flattery, subordinates the universality of the promise to particular intentions.

us, no man is a hero to his valet), but that does not mean that it is the most salient aspect of the action (as Hegel reminds us, it is because the latter is a valet).⁹³ The emphasis on particularity or universality is itself neither true nor false; it is neither true that everything, even the vices of the wealthy, is good, nor is it true that everything, even a life spent in noble service, is vanity, but each of these viewpoints is a product of this particular split, this particular relation. These perspectives are equally flawed, equally partial, and moving beyond them requires both a new understanding of social existence, one for whom the opposition between the particular and universal, the 'I' and the 'we', is overcome, but also, and most importantly, this overcoming cannot take place without transforming the various institutions of the economy and state, which are nothing other than articulations of this relation. It is also in this section that Hegel introduces alienation: alienation is both the condition for acting, it is necessary for the individual to alienate something of its natural conditions in order to act in and through culture, but it is also that which any individual struggles against.⁹⁴ This basic logic, in which the struggle is never as simple as the struggle of the individual against society, but of individuation against its very conditions, permeates the entire articulation of spirit. In the *Phenomenology*, this struggle passes through the history of faith, enlightenment, and religious representation, eventually arriving at absolute knowledge, the recognition of the 'I in the we'. The emphasis is on historical progression.

All of these themes – work, alienation, recognition, state power, and economic activity – return in the *Philosophy of Right*. Now, however, the emphasis is no longer on the historical development of spirit, of transindividuality from its implicit condition as ethical substance to its conscious articulation as project and concept, than on its politics, its transformation from substance to subject. It is not a matter of charting the development of spirit as the condition for the transindividual individuation, but of articulating the proper institutional organisation, an organisation that can make it both the condition for individual freedom and collective cohesion. Most importantly, it is in the *Philosophy of Right* that we approach something close to Spinoza's Appendix to the *Ethics*: not only a critical engagement with a particular individualistic idea of subjectivity, but a critical genesis of the constitutive practices and relations that produce such a perspective. That Hegel's most critical remarks about individuality appear in a work of political philosophy reveals the shifting objects of Spinoza and Hegel's critique; what Spinoza addressed as a general tendency

93 Hegel 1988, p. 34.

94 Russon 2001, p. 126.

to posit man as a kingdom within a kingdom, a tendency reinforced by religion, is for Hegel the specific product of modern existence under the nascent market. The *Phenomenology* offered a general account of the transindividual account of subjectivity, but the *Philosophy of Right* offers not only Hegel's specific understanding of the politics of transindividuality, but also his development of transindividuality as a critical perspective. Through reading these two texts together, reading the critique and theory, it becomes possible to grasp the transindividual dimension of Hegel's thought.

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is concerned with the question of right, with the justification of the state in terms of the manner in which its fundamental institutions and structures make possible freedom. Freedom is understood not just in terms of individual autonomy, the capacity to choose this or that, but the capacity to choose the conditions for such freedom, the institutions and structures that make it possible.⁹⁵ It is possible to see the book ultimately divided in half, as the first two sections view the problem of right, the problem of justice through the formal conditions of law and moral duty, while the second is concerned with the substantial institutions and customs that define humankind's ethical life or second nature. These two parts would seem to be divided between theory, the formal investigations of abstract right and morality, and a practical engagement with the existing realities and contradictions of the family, civil society, and the state. However, such a division gets both sides wrong: First, it fails to see the way in which even these early sections are concerned with a fundamental problem, demonstrating the way in which certain conceptions of freedom, specifically those focusing on abstract conceptions of right, are necessarily inadequate.⁹⁶ Second, it fails to see the way in which even the later sections, which are often accused of being merely descriptions of the existing Prussian state, are prescriptive, arguing for the way social structures must necessarily be reorganised.⁹⁷ What unifies both of these sections is Hegel's fundamental problem, that of a redefinition of freedom: freedom not as the abstract capacity to will this or that, to make a choice or to own property, but as the capacity to posit its presuppositions, to choose its conditions, including structures and norms. The individual must recognise itself in its relations to others, as well as institutions and norms.

In the section on Ethical Life, or *Sittlichkeit*, this trajectory passes through three different institutions: family, civil society, and the state. These institutions

95 Honneth 2010, p. 12.

96 Honneth 2010, p. 19.

97 Losurdo 2004, p. 78.

each have their own particular rules, norms, and ways of relating to each other, which define not only the institution, but also the particular organisation or articulation of individuation found in each. The family, civil society, and the state are not each just a set of rules, or even a set of relations, but a way of living in the world. The world, others, and oneself look differently when viewed from the perspective of the family, civil society, or the state. Which is to say that it is possible to view each section as part of the transindividual constitution of individuality. The passage from one to another is a transformation of individuation, a destruction and a creation. As Balibar writes,

The idea that is at the heart of the problematic of *Sittlichkeit* is that of a dialectic of deconstruction and reconstruction of belonging, which profoundly defines a certain modality of political subjectivation: from this point of view, the life and liberty of the individual consists in what is effectively a permanent play between two poles which cannot be abstractly opposed to each other and which also provide an immediately transindividual character to self-consciousness, making the constitution of the 'self' a function of its relation to the other.⁹⁸

Ethical life can then be understood as a linear, diachronic, progression of an individual through each of these spheres, or relations: from the family, with its emphasis on selfless love; to civil society, grounded on individual competition; and finally to the state, grounded on an understanding of one's place in a larger order. Or it could be understood as synchronic presentation of the different aspects of ethical life, whose contradictions and conflicts reinforce and necessitate each other: the family requires civil society to meet its needs, while civil society requires the state to mediate and ameliorate its conflicts, and the state requires the family to produce and educate its subjects, and so on. To inhabit one, to live by its rules and norms, is to inhabit the others. Regardless of which reading is pursued, the fundamental fact to stress is that these various spheres, or institutions, are not just places through which different individuals pass, but transindividual relations, constitutive and constituted by different individualities.⁹⁹ These institutions are transindividual in that they are constituted by and constitute the individuals that pass through them.

⁹⁸ Balibar 2010b, p. 173, my translation.

⁹⁹ The transindividual development of ethical life can be illustrated by examining a text which has an unthematized proximity to it. In *Commonwealth*, Hardt and Negri sketch out the three spheres of the common – family, corporation, and nation – not as actualisations of the ethical idea, but as different figures of the corruption of the common. The family

The first of these, the family, is the immediate ethical substantiality.¹⁰⁰ In the family, there is no rigid distinction between the concern for oneself and the concern for others. Individuals are immediately identified with their obligations and rights. Thus, it is possible to see in Hegel's understanding of the family a restatement and situation of his earlier interest in love rather than 'struggle for conflict' as a transindividual relation. More importantly, one can see in the family a restatement of Hegel's historical identification of ancient Greece with ethical substantiality – after all, *Antigone* is fundamentally a family drama. Now, love, the family, and with it, the immediacy of ethical substantiality, are resituated not at the beginning of the history of Spirit nor as its eventual reconciliation, but as one particular sphere in 'Ethical Life'. Which is to say that the family is not a natural relation. It is the initial education and socialisation of desire, the constitution of second nature and habit.¹⁰¹ (Hegel's entire discussion of marriage and what appear to be asides on the nature of incest, concubines, and sex have as their one consistent theme the articulation of this distinction between nature and culture.) As much as the family is grounded in the biological necessity of needs and reproduction, the individual must come to understand this as an ethical relation, as a relation defined by obligation, duties, and rewards. Obligation at this stage is still heavily shaded by affect, by the immediate and unconscious aspect of love. Despite this ethical dimension, the family, and the sort of relations that define it, are insufficient, and necessarily so. The family needs resources, needs to go beyond itself, and is constantly disintegrating into individuals cast out into the world of work and needs, into civil society.

is described as 'the principle if not exclusive site of collective social experience'. The family functions in the social imaginary as the locus of intimacy and solidarity, while simultaneously corrupting such affects, limiting them to a projected narcissism: care for 'my' family is little more than care for myself. The family is the common presented on the dominance of the same, the rule of identity. In a similar fashion, the corporation represents the collective dimension of work. Work, even work in capitalism, entails a development of humankind's co-operative powers, but in capitalism these powers are often misrecognised as the power of capital itself. Finally, the nation is perhaps the most fundamental corruption of the common: fundamental because insofar as political action takes the nation as its unquestioned site, it remains the unsurpassable idea of collectivity that functions as the basis of all politics, the only alternative to the individual. Family, the corporation (or capital), and state are corruptions of the common: the common is expressed in each as a necessary condition, but in such a manner that its expression is subordinated to hierarchies and exclusions that restrict its capacity (Hardt and Negri 2009, p. 160).

100 Hegel 1991a, p. 199.

101 Hegel 1991a, p. 47.

As much as Hegel's treatment of civil society is simply the middle term in the passage from the substantial basis of the family to the universality of the state, the stakes of this section are greater. It is in this section that Hegel engages with not only political economy, the works of Adam Smith, as the specific science of need and work, but also the particular philosophical anthropology underlying political economy, its understanding of individuality. Hegel argues that political economy's merit is in its ability to perceive necessity in what appears to just be the isolated actions of individuals. Hegel's remark on this passage compares it to astronomy, the study of the stars. Political economy is the natural science of society. The analogy of a natural science is very precise, since for Hegel natural sciences are a form of knowledge that is exterior to that which they comprehend, the planets do not comprehend their order.¹⁰² To argue that political economy is like astronomy is not just to assert that it grasps order beneath contingency, the invisible hand beneath the arbitrary acts of competition, but that it comprehends this order in a way that its subjects do not. This applies to the actions of individuals first and foremost, who do not understand the way in which 'civil society' is both a condition and effect of their actions, shaping their way of seeing the world. For Hegel, the individual of social contract theory is the unrecognised product of civil society and its constitutive misrecognition.¹⁰³ As much as this viewpoint emerges from the market, from day to day interactions where needs are met, and isolated individuals find themselves in relation without leaving their isolation, it does not adequately comprehend it. Any attempt to construct the state, to construct politics, from the perspective of civil society, from its limited conceptual vocabulary of interest, competition, and contract, fails to grasp the actual relation between the state and the individual. Hegel is in some sense the first theorist, and the first critic, of 'possessive individualism', of the failure of the attempt to construct an idea of the state from the perspective of market relations.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, any nostalgic longing for a society without individual competition and conflict, a society that would

102 Hegel 1988, p. 16.

103 Ogilvie 2012, p. 50.

104 Lefebvre and Macherey 1987, p. 24. The reference here is to C.B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: From Hobbes to Locke*, and specifically his argument that 'possessive individualism' is not only a specific political anthropology of self-possession, but models political relations on market relations. As Macpherson defines this conception, 'The individual is proprietor of his own person, for which he owes nothing to society. He is free to alienate his capacity to labour, but not his whole person. Society is a series of relations between proprietors. Political society is a contractual device for the protection of proprietors and the orderly regulation of their relations' (Macpherson 1962,

be an organic totality is fundamentally misplaced.¹⁰⁵ It is in this discussion of civil society that we find Hegel's critical account of transindividuality: critical in the sense that it offers a genesis of individuality, its emergence from market relations, as well as an understanding of the limits of this perspective, its inability to grasp its own constitutive relations. Civil society is placed between the family and the state, it ruptures the former's affective immediacy, the bonds of love, but its isolated self-interested subjects require other bonds, other relations in order to eliminate conflict and contingency.

This education, the transformation of the perspective of civil society, takes two paths that have already been outlined by the *Phenomenology*: the first is through consumption; the other is through work. In the first, need moves from its immediacy and contingency, determined entirely by location and climate, to universality and sociality, through the work of civil society itself. As needs and the possibility of meeting them multiply through the work of civil society, the drive to make profit and exploit others, they necessarily become more conscious, intelligent, and free. As Hegel writes,

The social moment accordingly contains the aspect of liberation, because the strict natural necessity of need is concealed and man's relation is to his own opinion, which is universal, and to a necessity imposed by himself alone, instead of simply to an external necessity, to inner contingency, and to arbitrariness.¹⁰⁶

Civil society, the system of market-based relations, is an education of desire, traversing the same terrain as the *Phenomenology*, but in a fundamentally different sense. The movement is from immediacy and particularity to universality. Except now recognition passes through the consumption of things. Consumption is no longer that which cuts the 'Master' off from the world, from self-consciousness and an awareness of himself, but it puts the individual in relation with others even as she selects her clothing, food, and shelter in the privacy of her own home. In choosing from the variety of goods available on the market, rather than what is naturally given, determined by the contingency of place and season, one necessarily chooses according to social criteria, the recognition of

p. 269). As Balibar argues, Macpherson's thesis should be considered another thesis of the foundations of capitalism, comparable to Marx and Weber, but focusing on its particular 'subjectivation' (Balibar 2010a, p. 95).

105 Thus the inclusion of civil society as an integral aspect of Hegel's thought, and even the dialectic itself, marks Hegel as the quintessentially modern thinker (Lukács 1978, p. 17).

106 Hegel 1991a, p. 230.

others. In a sharp departure from the *Phenomenology*, desire can still be understood as the desire for another consciousness, but this other consciousness can, it would seem, be mediated by the objects one buys, the social needs that are a condition and an effect of socialisation.¹⁰⁷ Consumption is itself a form of individuation, a passage from the immediacy of nature to the constitution of society. As Jameson writes,

This is then a wholly new sense of recognition: not that of the enigmatic other as a human like myself or an embodiment of the same freedom as which I know myself; but rather a recognition of myself in the object world and its social institutions, a recognition of these as my own constructions, as the only temporarily alienated embodiments of my own activity.¹⁰⁸

Hegel not only grasps consumption as a social relation, but as a relation that is transindividual, constituting needs and desires as much as it actualises them.

Civil society is not just consumption, the market place where people purchase their needs; it is also production, work. Labour follows the same fundamental logic, moving from immediacy and particularity to mediation and universality through socialisation and technology: as I am forced to work with others, and with the forces of machines, my work loses its one-sided and rough character to become universal. Work is a process of education, an education inscribed in the materiality of things and the interconnectedness of social relations:

Practical education through work consists in the self-perpetuating need and habit of being occupied in one way or another, in the limitation of one's activity to suit both the nature of the material in question and, in particular, the arbitrary will of others, and in a habit, acquired through this discipline, of objective validity and universally applicable skills.¹⁰⁹

107 This is a remarkable shift from the *Phenomenology*'s evocative image of the 'Master' whose consumption tells him nothing of himself and the world. It remains to be seen if this shift is one of a political motivation, Hegel's identification with the bourgeoisie, or if it is a reflection, conscious or unconscious, of the development of capital in the years since 1806. Perhaps, Hegel was beginning to glimpse the emergence of what we call 'consumer culture', in which identity is shaped less by the struggle for recognition than by the choices of consumption.

108 Jameson 2010, p. 106.

109 Hegel 1991a, p. 232.

Work sands off the rough edges of particularity, making individuals interchangeable, dependable, or, in a word, disciplined. It is possible to view this as part and parcel of the progression from the natural existence of the family, riddled with particularity and contingency, and the universal existence of the state. As much as work prepares individuals for their place in society, socialising them, it does not and cannot guarantee that they would have a place. The division of labour, and its mechanisation, makes possible the expulsion of masses from work, rendered superfluous by the very habitual repeatability that he or she embodies.

The different status of labour, of work, from the *Phenomenology* to the *Philosophy of Right*, as externalisation and education, could be understood as political transformation, the common image of Hegel's transition from a young supporter of the French Revolution to an older supporter of the Prussian state; or, if one wanted a less biographical explanation, a reflection of the changing status of work itself, from the waning of the artisanal idea to the rise of the factory and large-scale industry. Beyond these interpretive issues, it reveals fundamental problems regarding the transindividual status of labour (problems that will be returned to with respect to Marx in subsequent chapters). In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel primarily considers work in terms of the isolated actions of the slave, externalising her consciousness in an object. As much as this externalisation entails its own dialectic, the cunning of its mastery through submission, it is not considered in its fundamental sociality and historicity. This isolation has been interpreted as either a lack of historical specificity or an ideological nostalgia for a past form of work.¹¹⁰ This isolation makes possible the thematics of externalisation, causality, and recognition, making it possible to see in work the basic contours of the cunning of reason; work becomes the model of rationality. In contrast to this, the *Philosophy of Right* presents work as always already socialised, as subject to the constraints of the tool and the presence of others. Thus, work is seen not so much as the productive activity of the individual, but the production of an individual, the constitution of habits, discipline, and norms – second nature. The tension between these two aspects, between the individual as producer and produced,

110 Marx famously criticised Hegel's *Phenomenology* for only grasping labour as abstract labour. As Marx writes, 'He grasps *labour* as the *essence* of man – as man's essence which stands the test: he sees only the positive, not the negative side of labour. Labour is *man's coming-to-be for himself* within *alienation*, or as *alienated* man. The only labour which Hegel knows and recognises is *abstractly mental* labour' (Marx 1964, p. 177). In contrast to this, Jameson argues that Hegel's conception of work is a handicraft ideology (Jameson 2010, p. 68).

as cause and effect, can be seen as perhaps intrinsic to work itself, or the limitations and merits of Hegel's approach. What is crucial, however, is the way in which this tension unfolds in Hegel's dialectic, as individuation and socialisation are brought together to define a particular account of transindividuality.

Both consumption and work begin to overcome the immediate and natural particularity of individuality, the self-interest of civil society, but they do so in opposed, even contradictory, ways.¹¹¹ They are both transindividual individuations, the one pushed towards particular self-expression, the other towards interchangeability: consumption is the moment of individuation, of differentiation, the particular in the universal, while labour is the moment of discipline, the universal in the particular. There is still a contradiction between consumption and production, but it is not the stark contradiction between the emptiness of the lord's desire and the realisation of the bondsman through labour. It is no longer the difference of two different conceptual personae, of master and bondsman, but two different facets of individuation in civil society.¹¹² Their sense is somewhat opposed to the meaning that Hegel gave them in the passage on self-consciousness; work is no longer a recognition, the basis for the slave's formation of self-consciousness, but is subject to the 'division of labour' which makes work more and more unconscious and mechanical, eventually displacing the worker in favour of the machine. Consumption, as we have seen, is no longer the emptiness of the master's desire, but is the basis for a social and reflective constitution of individuality. The difference between work and consumption threatens to divide civil society, making it difficult to think of it as a single institution dominated by a central set of practices and perspectives. Unlike the family, which is defined by a single affect and attitude, that of love, civil society cannot entirely be subsumed under the attitude of interest, as this interest is split between its socialisation in production and consumption.¹¹³ It is easy to identify consumption with individual self-interest, but the connection between self-interest and work is harder to maintain. As Hegel writes, describing this division, 'In these opposites and their complexity, civil

111 As Jacques Rancière writes, 'But the civilization of work immediately backfires on the worker. It proves its excellence in producing "commodities" that can develop the universal sociability of cultivated life but at the price of fixing more firmly in their place artisans destined for the simple reproduction of their work capacity and the solitary repetition of a machine-like gesture' (Rancière 2004, p. 208).

112 Jameson 2010, p. 112.

113 Honneth 2010, p. 75.

society affords a spectacle of extravagance and misery as well as of the physical and ethical corruption common to both.¹¹⁴

That civil society leads to a contradiction between work and consumption, wealth and poverty, is not immediately a problem. As much as this division troubles the idea of each sphere of civil society as expressing one particular idea of social relations, one particular way of relating to others – such as love in the family or universality in the state – it could just be the contradiction that moves society beyond a competitive and market-based analysis to the state.¹¹⁵ The logic of the *Philosophy of Right* is, after all, one in which the contradictions of one sphere give rise to the necessary passage into the next, the family into civil society, civil society into the state. However, Hegel's own text offers a series of supplements of sorts, the passages on the estates and corporations, as well as the infamous passages on the rabble and colonisation, all of which suggest that the sociality of civil society poses problems which exceed the simple progression from the family to civil society.¹¹⁶

At the core of civil society is, as we have seen, Hegel's fundamental understanding of economic activity, individual work, particular interest, which serves society, serves the universal. This relation should be reciprocal, if the work of the individual benefits society, then the individual should be able to count on society for his or her needs. However, at this stage the relation between the particular and the universal, the 'I' and the 'We', is still burdened by particularity, by the particular differences and contingencies of the labour process. Natural differences of skill and ability continue to have their effects, effects that are complicated by the uncertainties and negative consequences of the labour process, such as unemployment and injuries caused by the development of machinery. Hegel's solution, or partial solution, is to argue for the development of the estates [*Stände*] to mediate this conflict. The estates, the classes of society, defined by their work provide the basis of social belonging, caring for the basic needs of their members. Hegel's categorisation of the estates – as the substantial estate (agriculture), the formal estate (business and production), and the universal estate (civil service) – repeats so faithfully the formula of substance, individuality, and universality that it risks reducing Hegel's argument to a caricature of his logic.¹¹⁷ (This division also seems to repeat the general articulation of the entire section on Ethical Life, repeating the relation between

¹¹⁴ Hegel 1991a, p. 222.

¹¹⁵ Honneth 2010, p. 63.

¹¹⁶ Melamed 2010, p. 39.

¹¹⁷ Part of Marx's argument in *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* is that it subordinates politics to the relations of the logic. As Marx writes, 'What is essential

family, civil society, and the state, making agriculture the 'family' of civil society and civil service its 'state'). However, such criticisms, while arguably well founded, risk obscuring Hegel's fundamental point about the relationship between labour and individuation. The different estates are defined by a particular kind of work, by a particular relation to a resource, which in turn defines a particular perspective and social relation. The agricultural estate is characterised by natural substance, by its contact to earth and the seasons; the estate of trade and industry by its individuality and self-reliance; while the estate dedicated to civil service is the universal, the general interest personified. Hegel's estates, or classes, are not just defined by economic standing, but by the way in which work, and a particular activity determines and shapes a particular kind of individuality.¹¹⁸ Thus, it is possible to see estates as mediating between the division between consumption and labour, between individuation and education. Moreover, they work against the centrifugal force of civil society, its reduction into isolated competitive individuals, providing a centripetal basis of belonging. Hegel's 'classes' do not determine a history of conflict, of class struggle, but rather overcome the latent competition and division at the heart of civil society.¹¹⁹

The contradiction between Hegel's two perspectives on labour – labour as an externalisation of individual thoughts and desires, and labour as education and formation of the individual – now get displaced across the different estates. The estates are distinguished by the type of work they do, in terms of its form and content, which, in turn, shapes a particular formation of individuality. We could say that the estates do two sorts of work: they work to produce particular goods and commodities, but they also work to maintain a particular social relation. It is not just that the agricultural estate provides food and other necessities drawn from the land, but it provides a particular kind of grounding in tradition and belonging. The estates thus could be seen as a displacement of the already stated tension between two different dimensions of labour, a tension that is split between its traditional and modern dimension as well as its expressive and transformative aspects. In order for them to provide substantiality, particularity, and universality they must remain unchanged, the farm cannot become a business. (Nor can the universal estate, the estate of

to determinate political realities is not that they can be considered as such but rather that they can be considered in their most abstract configuration, as logical-metaphysical determinations' (1970, p. 19).

118 Hegel's idea of the estates could be understood as a concept of class composition. For class composition, see *Excursus Two*.

119 Lefebvre and Macherey 1987, p. 44.

civil service, become burdened by the particular interest of the business world). Hegel's remark illustrates this tension:

In our times, the [agricultural] economy too is run in a reflective manner, like a factory, and it accordingly takes on a character like that of the second estate and opposed to its own character of naturalness. Nevertheless, this first estate will always retain the patriarchal way of life and the substantial disposition associated with it.¹²⁰

Hegel's account of civil society is thus torn between a static conception, in which the different aspects form a circle, a whole with each part reinforcing the others, and a linear dynamic aspect, in which the development of technology, the division of labour, and the development of capitalism, disrupts the entire relation. The tension between this cyclical dimension, civil society as organic process, and linear dimension, civil society as modernisation, can be seen with respect to the rabble.

As much as the estates provide access to resources, mediating the conflicts between the universality of need and the particularity of circumstance, their fundamental role is primarily one of constituting social belonging. As Hegel writes, 'A human being with no estate is merely a private person and does not possess actual universality'.¹²¹ The estates define a place and a sense of belonging, shaping individuality. The role of the estates in transindividual individuation, in defining both belonging (collectivity) and personhood (individuality), can be seen in their opposite, the rabble. The rabble are those who are cast out from civil society, those unfit for work or who have lost their occupations due to the development of the division of labour. As Hegel argues, the plight of the rabble is not just that they lack the means to take care of basic needs, but that they lack the sense of belonging and integrity that comes from work.¹²² The rabble are defined negatively in terms of both their relation to society and themselves, they lack respect both for authority and for themselves. They are

¹²⁰ Hegel 1991a, p. 236.

¹²¹ Hegel 1991a, p. 239.

¹²² Hegel's description of the 'rabble' as a group that is without a place in society echoes a long tradition of anxiety about 'vagabonds', those displaced from the declining feudal order. As Robert Castel describes this anxiety, 'The two consecutive criteria of vagabondage are both made explicit here: the absence of work, that is to say the "idleness" associated with a lack of resources, and the fact that they "cannot be spoken for" that is as much to say, without communal belonging ... This individual with neither work nor wealth is also a man without a master and without hearth or ties' (Castel 2002, p. 64).

a class that is not one, not held together by any ideal. The rabble illustrates another aspect of the contradictory status of work, not the contradiction of its aspect of externalisation and its educational or formative aspect, but rather its social contradiction between its ethical dimension, its role in forming habit and character, and its economic aspect. This contradiction comes to light in any attempt to resolve the problem of the rabble. As Hegel writes:

If the direct burden [of support] were to fall on the wealthier class, or if direct means were available in other public institutions (such as wealthy hospitals, foundations, or monasteries) to maintain the increasingly impoverished mass at its normal standard of living, the livelihood of the needy would be ensured without the mediation of work; this would be contrary to the principle of civil society and the feeling of self-sufficiency and honour among its individual members.¹²³

To provide resources without work is to overlook its fundamental ethical role, creating individuals who have all of their needs met except their need for recognition and belonging. The opposite solution is just as one-sided and is equally flawed. Providing the rabble with work, with discipline and belonging, overlooks its economic aspect, overproducing goods and putting out of work those who have jobs (and places in the estates).¹²⁴ Work's status as simultaneously economic and ethical, providing for needs both material and spiritual, means that any attempt to focus on one side of the relation has disastrous effects for the other side.¹²⁵ It is impossible to have work as an ethical task of discipline without effects on the economy, just as it is impossible to provide needs without

¹²³ Hegel 1991a, p. 267.

¹²⁴ Plant 1977b, p. 113.

¹²⁵ Michel Foucault offers an interesting account of this contradiction of labour in his study of the 'Great Confinement'. As Foucault argues, work was seen as a cure for madness and other moral failures, which stemmed from idleness, but this focus on the ethical dimension of work, its role as discipline and formation of character, often contradicts its economic dimension, its role in prices. As Foucault writes, 'The classical age used confinement in an equivocal manner, making it play a double role: to reabsorb unemployment, or at least eliminate its most visible social effects, and to control costs when they seemed likely to become too high; to act alternately on the manpower market and on the cost of production ... What appears to us today as a clumsy dialectic of production and prices then possessed its real meaning as a certain ethical consciousness of labor, in which the difficulties of the economic mechanisms lost their urgency in favor of an affirmation of value' (Foucault 1988, p. 54).

undermining the ethical dimension of work. Thus, Hegel concludes, 'despite an excess of wealth, civil society is not wealthy enough'.¹²⁶

Hegel's solution to this contradiction is colonialism, the exporting of this contradiction, in the form of excess workers and surplus goods, to other shores. 'Civil society is driven to establish colonies'.¹²⁷ Before we even get to the state, the state goes beyond itself, colonising other shores. Hegel is profoundly ambiguous about this point, even including a note that argues that these colonies will eventually revolt and overthrow their master – arguing that this revolt will in time benefit the masters themselves. Hegel returns to the relation of masters to slaves, but now this dialectic has been moved from the supposed beginnings of human history to the historical moment of its articulation (from speculation about the origins of man to modern man reading about the revolts in Haiti in the daily paper).¹²⁸ While Hegel's discussion of the rabble, colonialism, and even colonial revolt begin to suggest an engagement with the 'bad side' of modernity, the disruptive force of capital and the violence necessary to European modernity, it is precisely this bad side which defines history's progress, provoking a higher social order than civil society.¹²⁹ Civil society poses problems that it cannot solve. The estates (and later the police and corporations) work to resolve some of these problems, mediating the contingency of particularity that plagues market relations, but any solution to these problems demands a higher order of social belonging, demands the state. The state is not just an institution with more resources, capable of forming colonies and monitoring commodities for adulterated products, but it is a fundamentally different way of viewing social relations. With the state, the universal is not just produced by the sum total of different particular interests, the way the market and its invisible hand unreflectively produce the universality of needs, but is itself conscious and explicit.

Hegel's discussion of the development of the state out of civil society is not just an account of how it is that particular institutions become necessary, but how these institutions and their transitions are perceived by those who pass through them. It is as much a development of consciousness, of a particular individuation, as it is the development of laws and institutions. Civil society produces an individual driven by his or her particular interest, a particular interest that is seen as necessary and good. The education of universality ultimately undoes this perspective: work and desire remain all too subject to the

126 Hegel 1991a, p. 267.

127 Hegel 1991a, p. 268.

128 Buck-Morss 2009, p. 48.

129 Balibar 2010b, p. 82.

contingencies of early capitalist existence, the contamination of commodities and uncertainties of the labour market, and the self-interested individual must ultimately recognise itself in the structures and institutions of the state. It must consciously will the universal, rather than see it as simply the means to its particular end. The family, civil society, and the state are each defined not only by their particular relations, but their particular way of viewing social relations. They are each transindividual individuations. The first, the family, is grounded on affects, and does not see a distinction between rights and obligations, self and other. Civil society disrupts this immediate identity, making possible a perspective of isolated self-interest (as much as this self-interest is mediated and tempered by the belonging that defines the estates). The state is universality, the recognition that the particular, the individual, only has its being, its existence, through the universal. These different ways of viewing society, of viewing social relations, are hierarchical as well as linear: as much as the first two are necessary, creating the biological individual, and disciplining and shaping his or her habits, it is only in the state that sociality becomes explicit and conscious. Each stage follows the previous one, resolving its particular tensions.

Hegel's account of the state arrives at a point that is very similar to Spinoza's, but by fundamentally different means. In each case it is a manner of working out a conflict of particularity and universality. Particularity and universality are not the individual versus society: particularity, in the case of Spinoza's understanding of ambition and Hegel's understanding of civil society, is not the individual outside of social relations. It is an individuation that either inadequately grasps its social conditions, in the case of Spinoza, or that does not recognise the constitutive nature of sociality, in the case of Hegel. Politics for each is a matter of a transformation of the transindividual conditions of individuality, grasping as necessary the relations that might otherwise appear to be burdensome.¹³⁰ As much as this can be understood as a politics of consciousness, a becoming conscious of the necessity of social relations, it cannot be separated from a transformation of institutions and practices. As much as Hegel and Spinoza might agree on the fundamental opacity of the self as a starting point, they also recognise that particular institutions and structures, namely religion and civil society, produce this opaque and partial perspective.¹³¹ None of this is meant to suggest that there are not profound differences between Hegel and Spinoza. Spinoza's dual genesis of the state, as well as his

130 Balibar 2010b, p. 75.

131 Fischbach 2005, p. 29.

general political ontology of affects and reason, mean that sociality (and individuality) are always constituted by affects and reason, by imagined conflicts and real agreement. They coexist in every society and in each individual; their temporality is neither linear nor cumulative. Every collective and every individuation is caught between multiple temporalities.¹³² In contrast to this, Hegel would appear to propose a trajectory whereby particularity is educated into universality; the perspective of civil society grasps the necessity of the state. The contradictions of civil society, unemployment, the rabble, and so on, lead to the awareness of the necessity of the state. The simple name for this progression is teleology, not as God's action in nature but as reason's progression through history. As much as Spinoza posits a trajectory in which the joyful affects and reason are the model we strive for, the desirability of which is grounded on the immanent conflicts and frustrations of the inadequate perspective on social relations, there is still the assertion that any sociality, and any individuality, will necessarily be constituted out of both of these aspects. This contrasts sharply with Hegel's progression from misrecognition to recognition, from the partial perspective of civil society to the state. Labelling this difference teleology, however, occludes much of what is at stake in different perspectives on transindividuality, the manner in which desire and reason, imagination and knowledge, intersect with institutions and practices shaping both individuality and collectives.¹³³ Teleology effaces by answering the question of the different relations of individuation.

With respect to Spinoza and Hegel we have identified two basic aspects of the critical account of transindividuality. First, this account is critical not just in that it is opposed to an individualistic anthropology and social ontology, but also in that it offers an understanding of the genesis of the possessive or autonomous individual, the practices and institutions that make it possible for human beings to see themselves as a 'kingdom within a kingdom' and all others as simply means to their particular ends. Second, given that the individualistic perspective is part of society, an idea and way of living that has its own conditions and effects, social relations, the city or the state, are best understood in terms of the similarity and conflict of two different ways of viewing society. In Spinoza these two different ways of viewing society, one based on ambition and the ambivalence of the affects, the other on reason and an adequate under-

132 Morfino 2014, p. 143.

133 Pierre Macherey has argued that the difference between Hegel and Spinoza is ultimately one of teleology, insofar as Spinoza offers a non-teleological dialectic (Macherey 1979, p. 259).

standing of the utility of social relations, constitute two different foundations of the state, two different ways of living and conceiving sociality that are each effects and conditions of social life. Hegel's focus on work and activity posits a division not between imagination and reason, but a dialectic between the way individuals shape and are shaped by their activity. Hegel deepens and extends this division, eventually seeing the division as a division between the particular and the universal, a division that is institutionalised in civil society and the state. However, in Hegel these two ways of conceiving of social relations are no longer seen as mutually constitutive, caught in perpetual tension, but are situated in a dialectical progression in which the particular must eventually recognise itself in the universal. Finally, we should add that despite the tendency in Spinoza and Hegel for this transindividual individuation to manifest itself in dualistic or antagonistic ways, between imagination and reason, the particular and the universal, there is also a tendency to see society itself as made up of multiple collectives and belongings (Spinoza's ambivalent communities of affect and Hegel's estates); there are as many collectives, as many individuals, as there are institutions and practices to establish relations and belonging. This last point can be understood as a critique of holism, the other enemy of transindividual conceptions: there is no more a bounded totality of society than there is an isolated individual.

Marx

All of these basic orientations of transindividual thought can be found in Marx's writings. Marx is not just one more name in a series of transindividual thinkers, however; in some sense his work, and its political legacy in terms of communism, is integral to the entire problem of transindividuality as it is posed here. Despite this, there is also a specific way in which Marx's thought, his specific texts, not the political and philosophical orientation it initiates and participates in, is productively situated after Spinoza and Hegel.¹³⁴ This

134 Of course, the influence of Hegel on Marx is well documented. The literature on this relation is immense, comprising multiple positions, and at times it seems as if the question of their relation is the only philosophical question that Marx merits. By contrast, the relation between Spinoza and Marx is more indirect and less documented. The young Marx's notes on the *Theological-Political Treatise* have been reprinted. However, as Vittorio Morfino has argued, these notes are nothing more than a scholarly residue (Conference Presentation, Historical Materialism). The relation of Spinoza and Marx is more one of overlapping problematics than direct influence (Fischbach 2005, p. 29).

is not just a matter of chronology or influence, but of the problematics we have established thus far. Between Hegel and Spinoza there is a tension that could be summed up with the word teleology. This word fits, but it is important to notice that the telos we are concerned with is one that passes from imagination to reason, from the inadequate to adequate, from social relations misrecognised in their conflictual particularity to those same relations recognised in their common or universal nature. In Spinoza we have a conception in which imagination and reason, inadequate and adequate, are mutually constitutive of sociality, while in Hegel there is a definite telos from the misrecognition of society to its eventual recognition in universality. This leads to a second tension in terms of how we understand conflict in social relations: is it dualistic, caught between the universal and the particular, or is it multiple, constituted by as many collectives, as many transindividual individuations, as there are practices? This tension does not neatly divide between Spinoza and Hegel, but rather cuts through each. It is in Marx's thought that we see these two aspects, the relation between the imagination of social relations and their adequate grasp, as well as the tension between dualistic and multiple conflicts articulated.

One of Marx's earliest texts, 'On the Jewish Question', already begins to foreground both of these questions. While the text's stated topic is the status of Jews in Prussia, it begins to lay the groundwork for a critique of civil society and the state based on their respective individuations. The connections of this early text with Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* are apparent; both texts deal with the split between the state and civil society. However, as much as Marx works from this basic distinction between civil society, understood as dominated by particular and egotistical interest, and the state, as the universal, a split between man and citizen, he changes the parameters of this problem. The parameters are changed by examining the limits of political emancipation, the extent to which the state can liberate society from the conflicts and hierarchies of civil society. Political emancipation, the emancipation of politics, of the state, from birth, rank, education, and occupation does not dispense with these divisions and hierarchies, but lets them continue to exist in a private manner. They are still the basis for exclusion; they have simply been privatised, left to have their effects without state sanction or censure. This is in some sense a progressive step, especially compared to the feudal state, which gave official political status to such differences of birth and rank, but it has intrinsic limitations. These limitations manifest themselves not just in the partial nature of the solution, in which the state partially emancipates man, but also in the split that the state manifests in collective life. As Marx writes,

Where the political state has attained its full development, man leads not only in thought, consciousness, but in reality, in life, a double existence – celestial and terrestrial. He lives in the political community, where he regards himself as a communal being, and in civil society where he acts simply as a private individual, treats other men as means, degrades himself to the role of a mere means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers. The political state, in relation to civil society, is just as spiritual as in heaven in relation to earth.¹³⁵

There is once again a split between particular and universal, reason and imagination, but each are constitutive of existence, or thought and life. However, Marx argues that this dual existence is not equal or harmonious. It is not, as it was with Hegel, a matter of the particular interest eventually recognising its limited grasp of social relations, the need for a perspective beyond that of the contingent intersections of individual self striving, but of the particular remaking the universal in its own image.¹³⁶ Marx subjects the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789' to a critical reading in which the individual of civil society, and the importance of private property, reveals itself to be the subtext underlining and undermining the ideals of the citizen. While Article Six of the Declaration states: 'Liberty is the power which man has to do everything which does not harm the rights of others', Marx declares its implied content as 'liberty as a right of man is not founded upon the relations between man and man, but rather upon the separation of man from man. It is the right of such separation. The right of the circumscribed individual, withdrawn into himself'. All of this culminates in security, which Marx argues, 'is the supreme social concept of civil society, the concept of the police'. At the heart of the 'Declaration', Marx finds an inversion: rather than individual life, the private life of the bourgeois citizen, functioning as a means to political life, life in common and relation

135 Marx 1978, p. 35.

136 Marx's basic criticism of Hegel, at least at this stage, namely that the passage from civil society, from particular interest, to universal interest cannot take place so easily, is one of the central themes of the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Much of Marx's criticism focuses on the 'universal estate' and the corporation, the pivots between the particularity of civil society and the universality of the state. Marx argues that Hegel fails to see how much the particularity and self-interest will affect the supposed universality of the state, proposing that it will result not in the generalised bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is the universal estate caught up in its particular rules and the particular interest of its participations. 'The corporations are the materialism of bureaucracy, and the bureaucracy is the spiritualism of the corporations' (Marx 1970, p. 45).

with others becomes a means to individual life. The subject of the declaration of rights is not humanity, or even the somewhat circumscribed figure of the citizen, but the property owner. As Marx writes,

The matter becomes still more incomprehensible when we observe that the political liberators reduce citizenship, the political community, to a mere means for preserving these so-called rights of man; and consequently, that the citizen is declared to be the servant of egoistic 'man' ...¹³⁷

Political liberation is thus hardly liberation at all: all it does is create an idealised state, an image of citizens as so many beautiful souls.¹³⁸ This image is not only in contrast with the actual relations of competition and hierarchy, but it ultimately reinforces them, providing their ideological alibi.

Marx contrasts this limited political emancipation with human emancipation, an emancipation that does not just declare the social difference of rank, birth, and occupation to be politically invalid, but actually overcomes those very divisions. This requires the destruction of the abstract citizen, an overcoming of the division between universal and particular. This takes place when man 'has recognized and organized his own powers as social powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as political power'.¹³⁹ In a word, man must become 'species-being' [*Gattungswesen*]. Species-Being here designates less a supposed essence, some definition of man as the being who makes his species his object, than a project, a project in which one directly lives one's collective and individual powers, rather than externalise them into a state.¹⁴⁰

'On the Jewish Question' articulates the three basic components of Marx's critical account of transindividuality. It is a critique of the bourgeois individual, the isolated subject of civil society, as is well known, but it is also a critique of the state, of the abstract universal. These are not two separate critiques for Marx, but are part and parcel of the same critique: it is because society is divided, fractured between competing and hierarchical social interests, that

137 Marx 1978, p. 43.

138 Marx's argument, which sees the rights of egotistical man behind every citizen, is paradigmatic of the critique of politics from the standpoint of political economy. As Rancière argues, 'In a word, Marx turns a political category into the concept of the untruth of politics' (Rancière 1999, p. 82).

139 Marx 1978, p. 46.

140 Negri 1999, p. 223.

the state can emerge as 'illusory communal life'.¹⁴¹ It is also because of these very divisions that communal life can, at this stage, only ever be illusory, at best a kind of earthly heaven for beautiful souls, and at worst a universal which is nothing other than the cover for the interests of a particular class. Its terms are in some sense drawn from Hegel, but what it contests is precisely what Hegel takes for granted: the idea that one can pass easily from civil society, from an individuality constructed in terms of self-interested market relations, to the universality of the state, a universal which would be concrete, the recognition of the constitutive nature of social connections.¹⁴² The path from the particular interest in civil society to the universal of collective belonging is always broken for Marx: it can only be traversed by a transformation of the entire social order, by a revolution. This is because of the third term in this relation, the social dimension, which here, in this context, is ambiguously conceived as either civil society, or species-being. In the first instance, civil society, this social dimension is one of division, a division between particular interests and an abstract and illusory universal, divided between individual and state. Overcoming this division, a division between the universal and the particular, entails transforming this social dimension, making species-being a collective and individual practice. The division can only be overcome by addressing it in terms of both thought and reality, the existing social order and the images and representations of that social order. As Marx's thought develops, and the critique of the egoism of civil society becomes the critique of political economy, this attentiveness to the representation of collective life, its economic and political dimensions, the way that social relations are thought as well as lived, becomes central, underlying such familiar concepts as ideology and fetishism.

These terms, the critique of the reduction of social relations to individuals, and the constitution of illusory representations of collectivity continue through Marx's thought. In the 1844 *Manuscripts*, species-being appears not as a task, as part of a genuine human liberation, but as a capacity unique to humans. Animals reproduce themselves as individuals and engage with a specific aspect of the natural world, but only humans engage with the universality of the species. It is this potential that is lost, alienated, by wage labour, by the

141 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels 1970, p. 53.

142 Balibar 2010b, p. 172. Balibar argues that this interruption makes possible a reading of Marx's entire corpus. As Balibar writes, 'One might go even further and assert that the nature of a great philosophy is not only to incomplete itself but to incomplete others, by introducing itself or by being introduced in their writing: thus from the "Manuscripts of 1843" up to *Capital*, Marx prodigiously incompletes Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*' (Balibar 1995a, p. 146).

engagement in one particular task: 'Life itself appears only as a means to life'.¹⁴³ The picture that Marx paints in the 1844 *Manuscripts* is one in which alienation is a restriction to one specific mode of activity, to one job, and thus a loss of the universality and indeterminacy constitutive of human sociality. There is also a restriction at the level of consumption, whereby private property does not just lead to the alienation of one's activity into one particular activity, but also the alienation of the world into what can only be possessed. 'Private property has made us so stupid and one sided that an object is only ours once we have it'. Stupidity and one-sidedness reflect the reduction of activity and the world to wage labour and private property, a reduction that underscores Marx's understanding of species-being as a connection with all of humankind and all of nature. This connection can be transformed by history, as needs and potentials are redefined. The private individual, the individual with only her labour to sell and only her commodities to relate to the world, is not the zenith of freedom but the nadir of alienation, cut off from the species, from nature, and her own potential.¹⁴⁴

The critique of the isolated individual is given its most definitive, or at least most polemical, formulation in the first volume of *Capital*. As Marx writes,

The sphere of circulation or commodity exchange, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, equality, and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour power, are determined by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law ... The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each.¹⁴⁵

In this context it is not 'civil society' that is being criticised, but the capitalist mode of production, or, more precisely, the sphere of circulation. It is in this sphere, the sphere of commodity exchange, where buyer and seller meet as isolated individuals, that we get the free trade vulgaris' conception of society.¹⁴⁶ Where Hegel had identified civil society with one single idea and attitude

143 Marx 1964, p. 113.

144 Franck Fischbach has argued that what links Marx and Spinoza is a shared sense of alienation, alienation not as the loss of self, of one's particular identity, but as a loss of connection to nature (Fischbach 2005, p. 14).

145 Marx 1977, p. 280.

146 The way that the market, or the mundane acts of buying and selling, produces its own

towards social relations, that of isolated individuals pursuing their own social interest, Marx argues that the capitalist mode of production has to be understood as divided between two different spheres, each with their corresponding idea, their corresponding individuation: there is the sphere of exchange and the hidden abode of production.

Initially, the difference between these two spheres is between a sphere of equality and a sphere of difference. In the sphere of exchange, individuals confront individuals as equals, isolated and separate. In contrast to this exchange of equality, the hidden abode of production, where capital is made and labour power sold, is defined by a fundamental asymmetry. These asymmetries make up the bulk of *Capital*: the labourer must sell his labour power in order to live, and there is the reserve army of the unemployed, not to mention the flexibility of capital, all of which make the selling of labour power the exception to the general equivalence of the exchange of commodities.¹⁴⁷ Marx's passage illustrates this inequality graphically: the worker has 'brought his own hide to the market and now has nothing to expect but – a hiding'.¹⁴⁸ Understood less poetically, this 'hiding' is the extraction of the maximum amount of labour, the maximum value, from the labour power once it is purchased. In the sphere of circulation, capitalists and workers meet as equals, as buyer and seller, but this very equality, that worker and capitalist are each entitled to the equal rights of commodity exchange, demands that they come into conflict. The capitalist, the buyer of labour power, is motivated to get the most for his money, while the worker is trying to get the most for the commodity.

ideology of free and autonomous individuals meeting only through their self-interest, challenges the very idea of ideology as a concept dependent on a division between base and superstructure. As Jameson writes, 'the ideology of the market is unfortunately not some supplementary ideational or representational luxury or embellishment that can be removed from the economic problem and then sent over to some cultural or superstructural morgue, to be dissected by specialists over there. It is somehow generated by the thing itself, as its objectively necessary afterimage; somehow both dimensions must be registered together, in their identity as well as their difference' (Jameson 1991, p. 260).

147 As Žižek writes, relating this exception to Marx's critique of Hegel, 'This is also the logic of the Marxian critique of Hegel, of the Hegelian notion of society as a rational totality: as soon as we try to conceive the existing social order as a rational totality, we must include in it a paradoxical element which, without ceasing to be its internal constituent, functions as its symptom – subverts the very universal rational principle of this totality. For Marx, this "irrational" element of the existing society was, of course, the proletariat, "the unreason of reason itself", the point at which the Reason embodied in the existing social order encounters its own unreason' (Žižek 1989, p. 22).

148 Marx 1977, p. 280.

The fundamental problem is that what the worker is selling is not a thing at all, but labour power, time, and thus this conflict is not some kind of haggling or search for bargains in the sphere of circulation, but a conflict over labour within the hidden abode of production. 'There is here therefore an antinomy, of right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchange. Between equal rights, force decides'.¹⁴⁹ Force is the domain of class struggle and all of its effects on the labour process, political, technological, and social. The transition from the sphere of circulation to the sphere of production is the transition from the domain of equality to the domain of asymmetries of force.

The difference between equality and force does not exhaust the difference between the sphere of circulation and the abode of production. They are also distinguished by their specific transindividual individuation. Marx follows Hegel in seeing civil society as the domain of individual self-interest, but increasingly introduces a historical dimension to this identification. Capitalism's particular individuation has to be understood in relation to the institutions of money, and the destruction of the practices of belonging that defined the older, pre-capitalist societies.¹⁵⁰ Money dissolves all of the old ties that would connect me to others, dissolving with it the qualities that connect individuals to individuals. As Marx argues in the *Grundrisse*, it is only in the modern age, in the age dominated by money, that we have anything like the isolated individual:

In the money relation, in the developed system of exchange (and this semblance seduces the democrats), the ties of personal dependence of distinction of blood, education, etc. are in fact exploded, ripped up (at least, personal ties appear as personal relations); and individuals seem independent (this is an independence which is at bottom merely an illusion, and it is more correctly called indifference), free to collide with one another and to engage in exchange within this freedom; but they appear thus only for someone who abstracts from the conditions, the conditions of existence within which these individuals enter into contact (and these conditions, in turn, are independent of the individuals and, although created by society, appear as if they were natural conditions, not controllable by individuals).¹⁵¹

149 Marx 1977, p. 344.

150 Jameson 2011, p. 16.

151 Marx 1973, p. 164.

The isolated individual is a historical, not a natural, condition.¹⁵² Moreover, it has to be understood as social, despite all appearances to the contrary.¹⁵³ Marx is somewhat ambiguous as to whether this is a matter of a transformation of individuation itself, the constitution of new individuals no longer constrained by personal relations of dependence, or a transformation of how individuation appears, as a kind of false consciousness.¹⁵⁴ This ambivalence as to the actual or imagined nature of individuality, even in its bourgeois form, relates to two fundamental problems. First, there is the problem of the specific institutions of capitalist society, the wage and the commodity, all of which relate individuals without relating individuals, bringing individuals into necessary contact with the labours and desires of others, but through objects and forms of exchange. As Marx writes of fetishism, 'the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour'.¹⁵⁵ The mention of fetishism brings us to the second point, namely the ambiguity of 'appearance' itself: to say that individuals appear isolated and disconnected in market relations is not necessarily to pose that this appearance is false, rather that it must be judged in terms of its effects in how human beings act and interact. These two problems intersect around a certain fundamental tension: individuals of the market are and are not related, their appearance as isolated and distinct obscures and reveals something of their social condition.

The individuation of the market is contrasted with the increased socialisation of production. Capitalism does not just destroy the feudal relations of dependence and title, but it also destroys the isolated producer and farmer. As capitalism develops through large-scale industry and the division of labour, the hidden abode of production demands even more connection and relation. As Marx writes in the section on 'co-operation':

152 Marx makes this distinction even in such early texts as *The German Ideology*. As Marx writes, 'The difference between the individual as person and what is accidental to him is not a conceptual difference but a historical fact' (Marx and Engels 1970, p. 194). This leads to the possibility of what Balibar refers to as the historical modes of individuation (Balibar 1970, p. 283).

153 Marx 1973, p. 156.

154 Hervé Touboul has argued that there is a tension in Marx's thought between a sort of nominalism, in which the individual is primary, seen most clearly in *The German Ideology* in which 'real individuals' are identified as the premise of all history, and an emphasis on social relations, in which individuals are merely bearers (Touboul 2004, p. 30). While this tension can be seen in the extreme division of such interpretations as Michel Henry and Louis Althusser, it overlooks the transindividual dimension that I am attempting to bring out here.

155 Marx 1977, p. 320.

Whether the combined working day, in a given case, acquires this increased productivity because it heightens the mechanical force of labour, or extends its sphere of action over a greater space, or contracts the field of production relatively to the scale of production, or at the critical moment sets large masses of labour to work, or excited rivalry between individuals and raises their animal spirits, or impresses on the similar operations carried on by a number of men the stamp of continuity and many-sidedness, or performs different operations simultaneously, or economizes the means of production by use in common ... whichever of these is the cause of the increase, the special productive power of the combined working day, is under all circumstances, the social productive power of labour, or the productive power of social labour. This power arises from co-operation itself. When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of this species [*Gattungsvermögen*].¹⁵⁶

The reference to species-being, or species capacities, sets up a different relationship between these capacities and labour from the one first proposed in the 1844 *Manuscripts*. It is no longer a matter of the alienation of these capacities, of being cut off from their potential, as existence is channelled into a specific kind of labour. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that in this case these capacities are exploited rather than alienated, made productive for capital. Marx's fundamental point is that co-operation, the work of multiple individuals in the same space or at the same task, is always more than the sum total of its parts, than the work of different individuals.¹⁵⁷ As Negri writes: 'Cooperation is, in fact, in itself an essentially productive force'.¹⁵⁸ The individual of the sphere of circulation may be the isolated individual of freedom, equality, and Bentham, but the individual of production is a 'social individual', an individual whose capacities and abilities can only come into being with the necessary presence of others.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Marx 1977, p. 441.

¹⁵⁷ Jameson 2011, p. 54.

¹⁵⁸ Negri 1999, p. 259.

¹⁵⁹ As Balibar writes, 'If we want to understand the conclusions Marx is aiming at, we must give this proposition its maximum strength. Not only does labor become historically "socialized", a transindividual activity; essentially it always was one, inasmuch as there is no labor without cooperation, even in the most primitive forms' (Balibar 2002, p. 309).

In this transformation [the worker] is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body – it is in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth.¹⁶⁰

The co-operation of these individuals constitutes a particular kind of surplus, a social surplus above and beyond the difference between necessary and surplus labour. Moreover, this surplus is obscured by the dominant representation of capital, by the images produced by the sphere of production, which present only isolated individuals contracting in their mutual interest. To the extent that this surplus appears at all, it appears as the power of capital, its miraculous capacity to produce surplus, what Marx refers to as a 'free gift to capital'.¹⁶¹ The social surplus is a gift that keeps on giving; as Marx argues, there is no division of labour without massification, without co-operation, and there is no technological perfection without division. The concentrated power of capital can only increase. The machines that perform repetitive tasks can only be developed once work is broken down into repetitive tasks. This is the genesis of technology, but not how it appears: technology, the massive machines of large-scale industry, appears to be something bought with money, the power of capital itself. Thus, the sphere of circulation becomes a truly miraculous power; it generates the image of society made up of isolated individuals, and appropriates whatever exceeds this, by making it appear as a product of capital itself.¹⁶²

160 Marx 1973, p. 705.

161 Marx 1977, p. 451.

162 This idea of capital as a miraculous power has been given its most forceful albeit cryptic interpretation by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. As Deleuze and Guattari write, 'the forms of social production, like those of desiring production, involve an unengendered nonproductive attitude, an element of anti-production coupled with the process, a full body that functions as a *socius*. This socius may be the body of the earth, that of the tyrant, or capital. This is the body that Marx is referring to when he says that it is not the product of labor, but rather appears as its natural or divine presuppositions. In fact, it does not restrict itself merely to opposing productive forces in and of themselves. It falls back on [*il se rabat sur*] all production, constituting a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed, thereby appropriating for itself all surplus production and arrogating to itself both the whole and the parts of the process, which now seem to emanate from it as a quasi-cause' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 10).

The question of appearance returns, only now it is not just a matter of the ambiguous appearance of individuality, but that of the appearance of social relations, social relations that appear primarily as the quality of objects, as in commodity fetishism, or as the effect of capital itself. Between the sphere of circulation, which is made up of isolated individuals, and the sphere of production, which represents their co-operative relations as the relations of capital, transindividuality, everything that exceeds the individual, cannot appear. Isolated individuals appear, the power capital itself appears, but social relations, the way individuals shape and are shaped by their relations, producing themselves and their social conditions, do not appear. The fetishism, of commodities and of capital itself, is Marx's explanation as to why the Hegelian passage from the particular to the universal is interrupted. One could argue, following the reading of the *Philosophy of Right* that we have developed here, that this interruption is developed on Hegelian grounds. The fetishism of commodities might be another way of framing the split between work and consumption as transindividual individuations. The only difference is that the individuation through consumption, through what Hegel called the sphere of need, does not lead to recognition of its universal dimension, its connection with and dependence on others, but to fetishisation, a naturalisation of the capitalist economy. There is no education of the particular, its eventual recognition of its connection with others in the state; instead there is a bifurcation of transindividual individuation. On the one side, there is the isolated and competitive individual of the sphere of production, while on the other, there is the co-operative social individual of the hidden abode of production. However, this second individual does not appear, does not see itself in institutions and structures; instead what is immediately visible is the fetishism of commodities, money, and the power of capital itself.¹⁶³ Between the two, sociality, what Marx refers to as species-being, cannot appear.

163 This idea of a society split between individuals who are isolated, cut off from relations, and an increasing massification of their powers, into something alien, can be traced back as far as *The German Ideology*. As Marx writes, 'Thus two facts are here revealed. First the productive forces appear as a world for themselves, quite independent of and divorced from the individuals, alongside the individuals: the reason for this is that the individuals, whose forces they are, exist split up and in opposition to one another, whilst, on the other hand, these forces are only real forces in the intercourse and association of these individuals. Thus, on the one hand, we have a totality of productive forces, which have, as it were, taken on a material form and are for the individuals no longer the forces of the individuals but of private property, and hence of the individuals only insofar as they are owners of private property themselves. Never, in any earlier period, have the productive forces taken on a form so indifferent to the intercourse of individuals as individuals,

This non-appearance is also to some extent its non-existence. Capitalist society is split between exchange and production. Different transindividual individuations, and different rules apply to each. The productive process, the labour of the social individual, is co-operative, but this co-operation cannot be considered communist in any prefigurative sense; it is not a glimpse of a 'free association of producers'. This is because neither of these spheres, production or consumption, can be considered to be separate from the other. As much as production is a co-operative relation, it is still a co-operative relation subject to the dictates of the extraction of surplus value, to an immense disciplinary apparatus that guarantees that labour is conducted to maximum productivity. Capitalist society is split, not just between the isolated individual of consumption and the social individual, but also between the anarchy of competition and the despotism of production. As Marx writes,

The same bourgeois consciousness which celebrates the division of labour in the workshop, the lifelong annexation of the worker to partial operation, and his complete subjection to capital, as an organization of labour that increases its productive power, denounces with equal vigour every conscious attempt to control and regulate the process of production socially as an inroad upon such sacred things as the rights of property, freedom and the self-determining 'genius' of the individual capitalist.¹⁶⁴

The two individuations, consumption and production, are not strictly opposed as individual to society, but are part of the same complex totality. The 'anarchy' of competition continually forces the capitalist to demand more productivity from the co-operative relations, simultaneously disciplining and alienating the social individual. Marx's analysis of the conflict of transindividual individuations in *Capital* repeats and deepens the initial analysis in 'On the Jewish Question': the division is no longer between 'the heaven' of the state and the earthly sphere of competition, but between the 'hidden abode of production', defined by co-operation, albeit a disciplined and alienated co-operation, and the 'sphere of exchange', defined by independence and self-interest. What remains fundamentally the same in both texts, however, is that the division

because their intercourse itself was formerly a restricted one. On the other hand, standing over against these productive forces, we have the majority of the individuals from whom these forces have been wrested away, and who, robbed thus of all real life-content, have become abstract individuals, but who are, however, only by this fact put into a position to enter into relation with one another *as individuals*' (Marx and Engels 1970, p. 190).

164 Marx 1977, p. 477.

between these two spheres is also the domination of one sphere by the other: the heavenly state was entirely subordinated to bourgeois individual interest, in the case of the 'Jewish Question', and in *Capital* the hidden abode of production is itself dominated by the maximisation of value that defines not so much exchange but capitalist valorisation.

Conclusion

Transindividual critique, as it has been developed in Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, does not just argue against a dominant and assumed individualistic social ontology. Rather, its fundamental critical task is to offer a genesis of this perspective, to explain how transindividual social relations create an individuation that does not adequately grasp or recognise its conditions. It could be argued that it does the same for holistic accounts of the totality, the other side of the current philosophical division, but this is slightly more ambiguous. Spinoza offers a critique of the totality grasped according to a teleological intentionality, as God, and Marx offers a critique of the totality of the social presented as the miraculous power of capital, but it is less clear if Hegel does so, unless one could argue that every sphere of ethical life, family, civil society, and state, imagines a totality in its own image.¹⁶⁵ In each respect, totalities are as much objects of critique as inadequate ideas of the individual.

The critical dimension of transindividuality is not limited to dispensing with individualist or holistic conceptions of individuality or society, but sets up its own set of philosophical and political problems as to how this transindividual individuation is constituted (the various institutions, practices, and structures) and represented. It is not enough to say that everything is transindividual, that all individuations are transindividual individuations. There are different ways, different practices, for constituting such individuations; some are oriented towards the minimum of individuation, as in the case of Spinoza's critique of religion, and some are oriented towards the minimal possibility for the recognition of connection or interrelation, as in the case of Hegel and

165 With respect to Spinoza and Marx, Negri argues that this critique of representation is the proper terrain for examining their connection. 'In other words, in the postindustrial age the Spinozian critique of representation of capitalist power corresponds more to the truth than does the analysis of political economy' (Negri 1997, p. 246). Spinoza and Marx start from an immanent constructive principle, *conatus* and 'living labour', and their fundamental task is to comprehend how this activity is inadequately grasped as a power of some entity, God or Capital.

Marx's understanding of civil society or capitalism. A corollary of this is that there are different ways of grasping transindividuality; Spinoza made the distinction between inadequate and adequate ideas of sociality, as that which defined political, social, and individual life; for Hegel the salient division is that between the recognition or misrecognition of constitutive institutions and structures; and Marx's entire problematic of ideology, fetishism, and species-being suggests that there are different ways for grasping this transindividual dimension. Of course, these two aspects, practices and representations, the order of things and knowledge, cannot be separated. Much of the difference between Spinoza, Marx, and Hegel, at least conceived broadly, is how they grasp the relation between these two, between practices and conceptions. Specifically, how they affect and transform one another. For Spinoza, inadequate and adequate ideas were mutually constitutive of sociality, while Hegel suggested, with some tension, a progression of recognition from misrecognition. Marx can be considered as torn between these two perspectives. Like Spinoza he dispenses with any linear or progressive dialectic from particular perspectives to a universal recognition, but unlike Spinoza, and closer to Hegel, the differences between these transindividuations are grounded not in human finitude, in the difference between imagination and reason, but rather between the relations of exchange and production as two different practices constitutive of different individuations. Although the dividing lines between the anthropological and the structural are subject to constant revision and division.¹⁶⁶

If one wanted to characterise this general critical perspective on transindividuality, it could be described as having three moments. First, as a critical perspective it begins from a spontaneous ideology that takes the individual as its starting point. This ideology is less a philosophical perspective than a general worldview reinforced and disseminated by such perspectives as religion, in the case of Spinoza, or market relations, in the case of Hegel and Marx. Second, it does not dispense with this starting point, arguing that the individual is not true, but rather critically excavates the practices and presuppositions that constitute its preconditions. Along these lines, it is not a matter of simply opposing the transindividual to the individual, but of understanding the way in which transindividual encompasses and includes its own misrecognition. Transindividuality is less a unity, a collective, than the tensions and relations that define

166 This can be seen in the history of reflections on ideology or fetishism in Marxism, which, at least on this reading, can be understood as transindividuations. Althusser's assertion that ideology is omni-historical could thus be understood as a turn of Marx's thesis towards Spinoza. For Althusser, ideology is the general name for the first kind of knowledge.

individual and collective life. The differences are as important as the generalities, however. With each philosopher considered, not only does the target of the critique shift, from theology to political economy and capital, but also the very terrain of the transindividual shifts as well, vacillating between ontology, politics, and political economy. As much as this shift can be considered provocative, exposing the way in which ontological conceptions of individuation intersect with politics and vice versa, it leaves the term vacillating between an ontological and anthropological definition. These tensions are not so much resolved as clarified as we turn to Simondon, and post-Simondonian conceptions of transindividuation.

Transindividuality as Politics in the Thought of Étienne Balibar

The previous chapter was framed as an exploration of Étienne Balibar's provocation that Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx can be considered transindividual thinkers, but as much as Balibar framed the question, the investigation was not limited to his investigations of those thinkers. Balibar's remark is provocative because it suggests that the basic problem of transindividuality can be found *avant la lettre* in these thinkers, before its formulation in the work of Gilbert Simondon. As I have argued, what makes these formulations of transindividuality before transindividuality useful is their explicitly critical dimension, the way that they criticise a certain philosophy of the individual not just as incorrect philosophy but, more importantly, as a persistent political illusion. Now, before proceeding to an examination of the concept in Simondon, it is worth examining Balibar's development of transindividuality as an explicitly political concept. As I will demonstrate, Balibar attempts to formulate a politics that addresses the ontological, historical, and political dimensions of transindividuality. As we will see, Balibar's attempt to articulate this political sense anticipates some of the historical and political questions raised by Bernard Stiegler and Paolo Virno, but it does so from a position that is more informed by a reading of Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx than of Simondon.¹

In Balibar's thought, the question – what does it mean to think politics from transindividuality, from neither the individual nor society as first principle? – becomes explicit. Moreover, it does so in a way that foregrounds and develops a problem that became clear in the relation between Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, that of the relation between transindividual relations, institutions, and practices and the individuations that emerge from them. In each of the thinkers considered, this relation was framed by the tension between a false, inadequate or ideological, conception of individuality, and the recognition (or adequate idea) of transindividuality. The inadequate idea of individuality was generally one that privileged the individual at the expense of its constitutive relations; a

1 Balibar makes it clear that as much as he has borrowed the term from Simondon, his actual understanding of the problem stems more from Spinoza (and subsequently Hegel and Marx) than Simondon (Balibar 1996a, p. 37).

kingdom within a kingdom, but it also included a fundamental misrecognition of these relations, presented as a totality standing above the individuals. This binary of the individual and society was conceptualised differently in Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx according to their specific historical moments. The three different accounts of transindividuality also differ strongly in terms of how they understood this passage from the inadequate to adequate, from misrecognition to recognition, or ideology to consciousness: especially in terms of how they understood the priority and efficacy of thought and practice. All of these dimensions come to the fore in Balibar's thought, with the added dimension that Balibar does not so much produce a theory of the politics of transindividuality in a grand sense, but examines the politics of class, race, and nation from the perspective of transindividuality. Rather than propose an entirely new speculative foundation for a new politics, Balibar writes in the conjuncture. For Balibar, transindividuation is situated between the relations that produce individuation and their representation.

As we saw with Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, transindividuality as a concept is articulated between a philosophical anthropology, an elucidation of desire, affects, work, and need, as the basic constituents of human existence, and an account of social relations, of religion, economy, and politics. For Balibar, both of these aspects combine in what could be called a 'political anthropology'. Political anthropology is not some attempt to ground politics on some ultimate anthropological bedrock, to declare whether or not man is a 'social animal' or a 'wolf to man', developing a politics from that foundation; nor is it an attempt to reduce all of human existence to an effect of power relations, to make the human just an effect of politics. What we are calling 'political anthropology' refuses both of these options, thus refusing the division between nature and institution. Nature, the fundamental aspects of desire, imagination, and language, cannot exist without some kind of organisation, some kind of institution, and no institution, state, or economy, can exist without becoming part of the most fundamental aspects of human existence.² This can be illustrated by what Balibar refers to as 'anthropological difference'. The basic attempts to define humanity, despite their pretensions to universality, all end up producing a division between those who are included or excluded in such a definition. There are always those who do not appear to think, do not speak, or lack the capacity to use their hands to carry tools. Every generic definition of the human creates its own exclusions. If we add to these generic definitions the classic dualisms that define humanity, such as male and female, sick

2 Balibar 1998, p. 78.

and healthy, mental and manual labour, divisions that also cannot be separated from their remainders, from those that fit into neither side, then we see that the very idea of humanity is inseparable from its institution.³ There is no definition, and no division of the human from the non-human, without its remainder, thus without its institution, with practices to police and maintain it. However, Balibar is less interested in the aporias and paradoxes of philosophical anthropology than in how this intersection transforms and is transformed by the historical organisation of political belonging.

For Balibar, the history of political anthropology can be broadly divided into three epochs according to the relationship between anthropological difference, the figure of the human, and political belonging. The first, the ancient epoch, is one 'in which the concept of the citizen is subordinated to anthropological differences, to the unequal status of the free man and slave'.⁴ The canonical example of this would be Aristotle's discussion of natural slaves and rulers in the *Politics*, but it appears at any time when political belonging is defined in terms of a constitutive exclusion of those unfit for politics. The second, modern, epoch would be that of the identity of the figure of man and citizen, of anthropological universality and political universality; the canonical formulation here would be 'all men are created equal', even if this ideal, inscribed in the various texts and constitutions of the modern period, continued to exist alongside what were often unstated exceptions (specifically slavery and the status of women).⁵ The final period, the one that we are living in now, is one in which this equation is being questioned, not in terms of a return of the old inequalities, at least not directly. Its questioning is framed by elements of existence that do not lend themselves to such formal universalisation, such as sexual difference; and those that unravel the very schema of the autonomous individual, specifically the transformations of knowledge and its reproduction, what Balibar calls 'intellectual difference'.

With respect to sexual difference, the reference is first to the ambiguous dialectic of equality and difference that has defined the history of feminism. It

3 Balibar 2004, p. 240, n. 21.

4 Balibar 1994a, p. 59.

5 That slavery and patriarchy were exceptions to a general identification of man and citizen, of humanity and the citizen, is debatable to say the least. Charles Mills and Carol Pateman have argued that the central figure of this anthropology, the social contract, should be understood as a 'racial' or 'sexual' contract, in which the exceptions constituted the rule. In other words, and taking the American experience as central, 'all men are created equal' is possible as an assertion of a legal and social order once a large portion of the population was excluded from the definition of men.

calls into question precisely the universality of equality, or that equality can be understood as being the same, having the same rights, the same identity. 'Equality here is not the neutralization of difference (equalization), but the condition and requirement of the diversification of freedoms'.⁶ This ambiguous dialectic, which simultaneously valorises equality and difference, reveals the fundamentally transindividual status of sexual difference. Transindividual inasmuch as sex defines collectives, dividing men from women (as well as gay and straight, bisexual, and transsexual), it does so in a way that is fundamentally individualised and intimate, forming the basis of individual identity.⁷ Moreover, any sense of sexual identity is necessarily framed in relation to the supposed 'opposite' sex, as well as the internal oppositions of gay or straight. Sexual difference is transindividual, not just in that it crosses the divide of individual and collective, but in that every individual sexual identity is constituted in and through its relation with others, with other collectives and individuals.

Intellectual difference, like sexual difference, is simultaneously collective and individual, dividing humanity into intellectuals and workers, minds and bodies, and like sexual difference the individual dimension is materialised in the body. As Balibar argues, 'it creates *body-men*, men whose body is a machine-body, that is fragmented and dominated and used to perform one isolable function or gesture' and 'men without bodies'.⁸ This division and fragmentation is already at work in the basic relations of capitalist production, but they become deepened as knowledge and information become property, and as machines take on the intellectual and physical dimensions of work. 'Then we are no longer dealing with a mechanism of division of human nature that practically contradicts the requirement of freedom and equality. Instead we are dealing with a dissolution of political individuality'.⁹ Self-possession, man as owner of himself, was as much a political figure as an economic one, defining an idea of individuality as much as a regime of property. The transformation of this not only threatens political subjectivity, but also reveals the transindividual basis for any politics, a transindividual basis that exceeds intersubjectivity, as individuation is dependent upon technologies of dissemination and reproduction.¹⁰

6 Balibar 1994a, p. 56.

7 Simondon 2005, p. 308.

8 Balibar 1991b, p. 211.

9 Balibar 1994a, p. 58.

10 As Balibar writes, 'It then becomes impossible in practice, and more and more difficult even to conceive of in theory, to pose on one side a right of property that would deal only with things, or with the individual concerned with the "administration of things"

Balibar's two examples of politics of this third stage of political anthropology, namely sexual difference and intellectual difference, historicise the emergence of the transindividual as a specific political problem. These two struggles, the struggles over sexual difference and intellectual difference, emerge after the supposed universalisation of the citizen, raising the question of the adequacy of this formal equivalence to the reality of social and economic existence. Moreover, they bring politics to bear on the supposedly apolitical realm of the home and technology, revealing politics to be coextensive with social relations. Which is not to say that this is some kind of new epoch, or even that the divisions between these periods is clean and neat. As we will examine shortly, individuation is always overdetermined, and it is overdetermined because it is historical.

Beyond the historical investigation of the different epochs, the concept of a transindividual political anthropology makes possible an examination of tensions and relations of the present. The fundamental institutions of political belonging (class, nation, and race) are all transindividual individuations, providing a basis for collective and individual identity. Such a declaration affirms the theses we have already seen at work in the general problem of transindividuality. First, there is the fundamental assertion that 'nature makes no nations', a point that could be extended to races and classes as well. Their existence constitutes an institution, an organisation of politics. Their origins are not to be found in some natural sentiment of belonging or identification, but are an organisation of affects, ideas, and bodies. Second, these different institutions are different organisations of the most fundamental aspect of human existence. Nation, class, and race are not some supplement to individual identity, something that could be adopted or dropped leaving behind a generic humanity, but encompass language and the body, the very basis of recognition and relation. These two theses cut two ways: first, against any attempt to naturalise race, nation, or economy, as something simply given, or reducible to psychological tendencies, as in many commonsense definitions of racism or nationalism; second, against any understanding of the economy or the nation that posits it simply as an institution or structure that leaves individuals unaffected. At first glance, it would appear that nationalism and racism are purely psychological attitudes, an excessive attachment to the state and a

(with the *societas rerum* of the jurists of antiquity), and on the other side a sphere of the *vita activa* (Hannah Arendt) that would be the sphere of "man's power over man" and man's obligations toward man, of the formation of "public opinion", and of the conflict of ideologies. Property (*dominium*) reenters domination (*imperium*). The administration of things re-enters the government of men' (Balibar 1994a, p. 222).

private prejudice against this or that group.¹¹ Against this psychological reduction of nationalism, Balibar argues that the nation involves an organisation of the fundamental aspects of collective and individual identity, specifically the role of language and education in forming national and individual identity.¹² In a similar manner, Balibar argues that racism must be understood as an attempt to represent and make sense of social divisions and conflicts. Race justifies and effaces the hierarchies of the social order, making it appear to be an effect of the natural difference of bodies. Class would appear to be relegated to the other extreme, to an economic classification, one that leaves individuality relatively untouched. However, class is not just income, but an organisation of one's basic place in the world, one's fundamental mobility and security.¹³ Race, sex, and national belonging are not private, intimate aspects of identity, nor is class public, existing only at the level of the collective. If racism and nationalism cannot be situated in some psychic interior space, and if the economy cannot be relegated to an external base, acting on subjectivity only at a distance, then they cannot be separated from each other, there is a fundamental overdetermination of any political belonging, an intersection of class, race, and nation. This pushes any thought of their relation towards singularity, a singularity that is illustrated by Balibar's writing over the last few decades, which takes the form of singular examinations of the specific politics of racism, citizenship, and identity, of writing in the conjuncture.¹⁴ However, it is still possible to examine each of these concepts for their general relations, to look at class, nation, and race as transindividual, revisiting Marx, Hegel, and Spinoza.

Balibar's engagement with class as a collective identity has a long history, beginning with his contribution to *Reading Capital*. Balibar's early text on the mode of production introduces the problem of reproduction as the intersection between the mode of production and the historical production of different individualities, the production of things and the production of subjectivity.¹⁵ From this intervention onward, there is a gradual reworking of the schema

11 As Balibar argues, there is a tendency to see race as merely psychological and individual, as not necessarily organised or structured (Balibar 1991d, p. 18). Conversely, there is a tendency to see nation, and nationalism, as well as class, as structuring society, but not necessarily individual sentiment and subjectivity (Balibar 2004, p. 17). Transindividuality dispenses with both of these ideas, positing the individual as the individual of the collective and the collective as nothing other than individuations.

12 Balibar 2004, p. 28.

13 Balibar 1991c, p. 182.

14 Balibar 2004, p. 144.

15 Balibar 1970, p. 252.

of base and superstructure, a schema that separates and hierarchically organises social structures and individuation, to the point where the two are seen as mutually constitutive. The mode of production short-circuits any division between economy and politics, as the same process, the same conflicts, traverse both. As Marx writes:

It is in each case the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the immediate producers – a relationship whose particular form naturally corresponds always to a certain level of development of the type and manner of labour, and hence to its social productive power – in which we find the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social edifice, and hence also the political form of the relationship of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the specific form of state in each case.¹⁶

The various determinations of politics, power, hierarchy, and domination are not only already present in the capitalist labour relations. The economy is not simply a base, upon which a political structure is constructed through multiple mediations, but it directly short-circuits any such mediation. Politics is already present in the economic base; the relation is more immediate than mediated. Balibar does qualify this remark, asserting that:

Such a thesis may and must seem blunt and debatable when looked at from a static perspective, if one reasons only in terms of given structures and ‘correspondences’ between these structures. However, the thesis can become singularly more explanatory if the notion of ‘determination’ is given a strong sense, that is, if it is considered as the conduction wire to analyse transformational tendencies of the market and bourgeois state in the past two centuries or, even better, following the best ‘concrete analyses’ of Marxism, to analyse the critical conjunctures which punctuate this tendentious transformation and which precipitate its modifications.¹⁷

As Balibar writes, ‘the work relation (as a relation of exploitation) is *immediately* and *directly* economic and political; and the form of the “economic community” and the State “spring” simultaneously (or concurrently) from this “base” ... In other words, the relations of the exploitation of labor are both the

¹⁶ Marx 1981, p. 927.

¹⁷ Balibar 1988, p. 34.

seed of the market (economic community) and the seed of the state (sovereignty/servitude).¹⁸ While this formulation suggests a strong form of economic determinism, the base determining the superstructure, Balibar's eventual formulation becomes one in which politics and the economy each short-circuit the other. The effects of the economy are always displaced onto politics, and vice versa. As Balibar writes:

The determining factor, the cause, is always at work *on the other scene* – that is, it intervenes through the mediation of its opposite. Such is the general form of the 'ruse of reason' (which is every bit as much the ruse of unreason): economic effects never themselves have economic causes, no more than symbolic effects have symbolic or ideological causes.¹⁹

This logic of displacement, of the absent cause, can alternately be understood as a logic of individuation: the economy can only have effects if it is individuated in comportments, ways of being and thinking; conversely, ways of being and thinking, what Balibar calls symbolic or subjection, can only truly have any efficacy if they effect positions with respect to distribution and production of resources and power within society, having economic effects.

As we have seen, Marx's *Capital* demonstrates how the economy, in the sense of the sphere of circulation, produces effects in the political sphere, the ideas of freedom, equality, and Bentham, and the individuation that they entail is an effect of exchange. All that remains to be added is the way in which these effects in turn act on the economy, on the site of production: how the idea of the autonomous and competitive individual of market society is imported into the hidden abode of production. Marx had already documented this in terms of the effects of competition on class and solidarity. It might be necessary to add that the economy acts in terms of both the sphere of circulation, with its images of free and autonomous individuals, and in terms of the labour process, production itself. As we have seen, production carries with it a different individuation, one predicated on the collective force of co-operation, but this is only part of the picture; capitalist production also entails the hierarchy and division between conception and execution, mental and manual labour.²⁰ Thus

18 Ibid.

19 Balibar 2004, p. 19.

20 Louis Althusser's posthumously published manuscript *Sur la Reproduction*, from which the well-known piece on 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' is drawn, contains a thorough investigation of this movement by which elements of the production process, such as the division between mental and manual labour, function as ideology, and ele-

bringing labour, 'the hidden abode of production', into politics can have different effects depending how it is conceptualised. Labour can be synonymous with collective powers, with solidarity, or it can be synonymous with hierarchy, with the need for division and supervision. That the economy carries with it multiple individuations, from individual competition, to hierarchy, and solidarity, means its effect on politics, its short-circuit, cannot be determinist in any linear or simple way. As Balibar argues, the economy itself, with its relations and forces of production, can even take on different political subjectifications, going so far as to reverse the standard terms of class struggle. The economy cannot act on politics in a univocal way, either in terms of the sphere of circulation or the hidden abode of production; its relations and contradictions require a representation, a simplification of their unstable meanings into a dominant sense, a dominant imaginary. The base acts through the constitution of imagination in the superstructure, while the superstructure in turn affects the divisions and relations in the base. Balibar sums up this schema as follows:

I even think that we can describe what such a schema would ideally consist of. It would not be the sum of a 'base' and a 'superstructure', working like complement or supplement of historicity, but rather the combination of two 'bases' of explanation or two determinations both incompatible and indissociable: the *mode of subjection* and the *mode of production* (or, more generally, the ideological mode and the generalized economic mode). Both are material, although in the opposite sense. To name these different senses of the materiality of subjection and production, the traditional terms *imaginary* and *reality* suggest themselves. One can adopt them, provided that one keep in mind that in any historical conjuncture, the effects of the imaginary can only appear through and by means of the real, and the effects of the real through and by means of the imaginary; in other words, the structural law of the causality of history is the *detour through and by means of the other scene*. Let us say, parodying Marx, that economy has no more a 'history of its own' than does ideology, since each has its history only through the other that is the efficient cause of its own effects. Not so much the 'absent cause' as the cause *that absents* itself, or the cause whose effectivity works through its contrary.²¹

ments of ideology, such as the ideology of the juridical subject, enter directly into the work relation through the labour contract. This ultimately scrambles any division between base and superstructure as inside or outside of the labour process (Althusser 1994, p. 236).

21 Balibar 1995a, p. 160.

The detour that Balibar is referring to here is not, as is often the case, a matter of scrapping the entire problematic of the mode of production in favour of an analysis of ideology, but an examination of the way in which ideology functions within the mode of production itself, as well as the way in which mode of production functions in ideology. That they both short-circuit each other means that there can be no direct causality from one to the other, that politics is always of the other scene, the effects of economic divisions on political identities and collectivities, and vice versa.

Balibar's use of the terms 'reality' and 'imaginary' to describe the two overlapping individuations, of the mode of production and mode of subjection, suggests Spinoza's dual foundations of the city in Part Four of the *Ethics*. While it is true that Balibar places this passage, and its dual demonstration of the city, from both imagination and from reason, at the centre of his interpretation of Spinoza's political anthropology, so much so that it informs his own understanding of the conflictual imaginary and real basis of political, social, and economic individuations, it is not a matter of simply transposing the distinctions of real and imaginary to base and superstructure. Spinoza's distinction is between an imagined identification, the imagined similarity of the other's passions and desires, and a real utility, the understanding that 'nothing is more useful to man than man' (EIVP37S2). In interpreting the relation between the imaginary and rational constitution of the state, Balibar stresses the opposition between imaginary identification and real agreement, arguing that the latter is predicated on difference, on different people with different abilities and skills. 'Man is more useful to man' only insofar as human beings differ from each other. We imagine others to be like us, but our political and social relations, the extent to which we are useful to each other, are necessarily predicated on difference, different skills, abilities and talents.²² It could be argued that real agreement, with its emphasis on interest, the striving to persevere, and the utility of difference, is the economy, and that politics, with ambition and the ambiguous task of managing collective identities, is politics.²³ Balibar argues, however, that what is missing from Spinoza's account of an economics of utility – the usefulness of man to man – is any account of exploitation.²⁴ Utility and ambiguous identification cannot simply be relegated to the separate realms of economy and politics but cut across both spheres, which is why 'imaginary' and 'reality' are at work in each. There is an ideology of the economy, an imaginary of economic relations,

22 Balibar 1998, p. 88.

23 Spinoza's anthropology has been identified with a liberal, or even neo-liberal, economic anthropology by those who celebrate this connection (Rice 1990, p. 272).

24 Balibar 2010b, p. 32.

just as there is a real basis for political relations and economic relations. One divides into two: economics and politics are both real and imaginary.

While Spinoza's dual foundations of the city cannot be immediately connected to base and superstructure, economics and politics, it does, however, prove useful for understanding politics, the state. Its constitutive ambiguity is not that of the tension between economics and politics, but within political belonging and individuation itself. The state, especially the modern state, which has inherited the ideal of the citizen, of a universal dimension, is always split between nation and state, between an imagined identity and a legal or institutional unity. The imagined identity, 'what makes a people a people', crosses the same terrain as Spinoza's *ingenium*, in other words every nation, every nationality, is formed by an organisation of the aspects that constitute collective and individual identity.²⁵ Language and memory play a central role in the formation of nations. In the attempt to constitute a people, to generate a fictive identity, the nation intersects with race as the quintessential fictive ethnicity. Race and nation constantly traverse each other: modern racist organisations consider themselves to be first and foremost national organisations, protecting the purity of the nation, and the national unit and belonging is impossible without the fantasy of a common language and heritage. However, the nation is not synonymous with the state; the modern state, the state that begins with the democratic revolutions, also has an irreducible universalistic dimension, an ideal of the citizen that is not tied to national belonging. Balibar goes so far as to see this division, a division not between bourgeois man and political citizen, but between nation and state, as constitutive of modern political conflict. As Balibar writes,

For my part, I consider the demarcation between democratic and liberal policies and conservative or reactionary policies today to depend essentially (if not exclusively) on attitudes towards ethnic discriminations and differences of nationality, on whether pride of place is given to national belonging or emancipatory goals (the rights of man or citizen).²⁶

The dual foundation constitutes two different subjects, two different transindividual individuations. The first is that of *homo nationalis*, the human individual defined not just through his or her specific language, but most of all through shared customs, habits and memories. The second is the citizen defined by an

25 Balibar 1991e, p. 94.

26 Balibar 2004, p. 24.

open transindividual process, by rights and obligations, which exist only as a collective project that is by definition universal.²⁷ These individuations coexist, constituting the conflictual basis for different individuations and different politics.

National belonging, national identity, especially as it is connected to shared language, history and memory, comes close to racial identity and race, which it can never fully extricate itself from.²⁸ For Balibar, race is not just a matter of a fictive unity, as a definition of belonging, but is also integral to the manner in which modern democratic societies deal with, or represent, the persistence of hierarchy and division. Hierarchy and division are always a scandal to a society organised according to the citizen, to an individuation of the citizen. There is thus also a proximity of race to class; class can always be racialised, not in the sense that it is ascribed to different races, but rather that it becomes attached to a rigid and permanent division in society. The division of mental and manual labour is inseparable from a division of society into 'mind men' and 'body men', with all of the expected ambiguous connections to animality.²⁹ Race reinscribes social divisions on divisions of the body, making social hierarchies justified and visible at the same time. Race (and the racialisation of class difference) resolves the incomplete nature of the democratic revolution; it is the revival of anthropological difference in societies that have declared such differences to be null and void.³⁰ As much as race plays a fundamental role as an alibi, explaining the persistence of inequality in a society that claims to be equal, it also plays an important role in the social imaginary. Race is an inadequate idea of social belonging and social division. As Balibar writes,

I shall therefore venture the idea that the racist complex inextricably combines a crucial function of misrecognition (without which the violence would not be tolerable to the very people engaging in it) and a 'will to know', a violent desire for immediate knowledge of social relations.³¹

27 Balibar 2004, p. 12.

28 Balibar 1991g, p. 52.

29 Balibar 1991b, p. 211.

30 Immanuel Wallerstein, in his contribution to *Race, Nation, and Class*, makes a much more sociological, even functionalist, version of this argument, arguing that a 'meritocratic' system, one which claims equality to everyone, eventually collapses under its own contradictions without racism and sexism to explain the persistence of hierarchy (Wallerstein 1991, p. 32).

31 Balibar 1991d, p. 19.

Racism is an imaginary, an inadequate idea in the full Spinozist sense of the term; it is both immediate, combining affect and imagination, and fails to comprehend its causes. It offers an immediate understanding of society, a transparent account of the social divisions and conflicts mapped onto the most superficial signs of bodily or cultural difference.

Race, nation, and class are all intersecting transindividuations, intersecting constitutions of collectivity, of groups, but also individualities, with their corresponding habits, beliefs, and idioms. Their specific mode of articulation depends on the given overdetermination of class conflict, racial history, and national ideology that situates a particular conjuncture. (Sexual identity, or sexual difference, also could be argued to belong in this list, but Balibar tends to treat sexual difference as something that modifies the other collective identities, particularly race, rather than a conflictual identification on its own terms. This is perhaps due to the fact that sexual identity is less the basis of a specific community than a division that exists within every community). This is an overdetermination in which 'the lonely hour of the last instance never arrives', to use Althusser's formulation, but one in which 'the determining factor, the cause, is always at work on the other scene'.³² The economy acts on politics in and through the transformation of symbolic, or imaginary, constitutions of collectivity, including the constitutions of class, of economic belonging and division itself, and these divisions and conflicts ultimately have real economic effects. These are the two modes, discussed above. However, this dialectic of causes and effects plays out against the backdrop of the history of the anthropological divisions that make up the major history of politics – a division that sets the modern figure of the citizen against all anthropological divisions.

It turns out that 'one divides into two' with the citizen as well. For Balibar, the citizen, the subject of revolutionary democracy, is split between its constitutive dimension and its insurrectionary dimension.³³ It is at the basis of state authority, but it is so only in its capacity to constantly contest, to revolt once again. The citizen is always both foundation and rebellion, the ground of authority and its contestation. It is with respect to this latter insurrectionary dimension of citizenship that we get a sense of the politics of transindividuality in Balibar's thought. The formulation that Balibar provides for this insurrectionary dimension is equaliberty, a combination of equality and liberty. This awkward neologism contests a longstanding ideological divide in modern politics: modern

³² Balibar 2004, p. 19.

³³ Balibar 2010b, p. 15.

politics, especially in its cold war variant, has often been based on the idea that there is a sort of zero-sum game for equality and liberty. The more equality there is, the less liberty there is, and vice versa. The free world was opposed to actually existing socialism: in the first, freedom had inequality as its necessary corollary, while in the second, equality could not be realised without the restriction of freedom. In contrast to this ideological zero-sum game, Balibar argues that actual progression of history has demonstrated the opposite case, that there is no attempt to suppress equality that does not suppress liberty, and vice versa. As Balibar writes, taking up the cold war divisions:

This thesis itself is to be interpreted 'in extension': equality and freedom are contradicted in exactly the same 'situations', because there is no example of conditions that suppress or repress freedom that do not suppress or limit – that is do not abolish – equality and vice versa. I have no fear of being contradicted here either by the history of capitalist exploitation, which by denying in practice the equality proclaimed by the labor contract ends up in the practical negation of the freedom of expression, or by the history of socialist regimes that, by suppressing public freedoms, end up constituting a society of privileges and reinforced inequalities.³⁴

There is an unmistakable overlap between transindividuality and equaliberty. What the former does with the anthropological, or ontological, postulates of the individual and the whole, the latter does with the history of the political struggle for liberty and equality. As Balibar argues, rights, individual rights, even those rights for freedom of speech and privacy, that set the individual apart from the community, cannot exist without recognition. As Balibar writes, 'We also know that this amounts to saying in effect that, while rights are always attributed to individuals in the last instance, they are achieved and won collectively i.e. politically'.³⁵ Rights, even those that defend the individual from the state, and the tyranny of the majority, are collective: they are the legal form of transindividual individuations. However, despite this overlap, Balibar does not develop equaliberty on the same philosophical terrain as transindividuality, nor does he refer to the same figures. Balibar's understanding of transindividuation is framed through a recasting of Spinoza, Marx, and (to an increasing extent) Hegel as transindividual thinkers in spirit if not in name. The points

34 Balibar 1994a, p. 48.

35 Balibar 1994b, p. 12.

of reference for equaliberty, however, are primarily political and historical. The initial point of reference is the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen', which Balibar reads not as a separation and inversion of the rights of bourgeois man and political citizen, but instead as a fundamental assertion of the identity of man and citizen, of anthropological and political universality. Equaliberty is not developed through an ontological examination, but through political transformations and historical experience. The connection between liberty and equality is demonstrated by the impossibility of negating one without the other. Any attempt to have liberty without equality, such as a society with basic formal rights but drastic inequality in terms of resources and access, or equality without liberty, such as a society with basic social guarantees but no basic liberties, is a contradiction.

Equaliberty is the name, or the concept, that defines the citizen as a transindividual individuality. As such it is opposed not only to the nation, which carries with it a fictive ethnicity, and a corresponding limitation to some imagined identity, in Spinoza's sense, but also to the political subject as subject to a rule. It is universal and active. The citizen is the insurrectionary side to political identity. As such it overturns and displaces the various partial identities and collectivities, classes, nations, and races which are so many different naturalisations of hierarchy and inequality. It cuts through the division between individual and society, public and private. As Balibar writes, 'The citizen properly speaking is neither the individual nor the collective, just as he is neither an exclusively public being nor a private being'.³⁶ The citizen is a transindividual individuation, but despite Balibar's interest in 'possessive individualism' as a figure for political individuation, there is little engagement with what we have identified as the critical dimension of transindividuality, the extent to which transindividual individuations are perceived as isolated or individuated. Rights, even the rights to privacy, non-interference, and freedom of speech, may be transindividual, created and sustained through a collective contestation, but that does not prevent them being experienced, lived, as individuated, even isolated. Equaliberty is a transindividual condition, passing through the collective recognition of the rights of the individual, but that does not mean that it is lived collectivity. The historic struggles for rights can be forgotten and they can appear less as a collective project than something given, an individual quality. In Balibar's rush to assert the identity of man and citizen, of anthropology and politics, he overlooks precisely why Marx argued for their separation. As Marx argues, social relations, specifically the social relations of capitalism, that pro-

36 Balibar 1991a, p. 51.

duce not only a fragmented individual but also a fetishised transindividuality in the form of capital. This point will be explored in Chapter 4.

The citizen of equaliberty is the contemporary individuation, the new set of transindividual individuations, brought about by the revolutionary tradition of modernity, of the second transformation of political anthropology. As such it raises the question of its relation to the first political anthropology, the inequalities of race, class, and nation, and the transformations that mark a new epoch in transindividuality, the transformations of labour, nation, and the lingering question of sexual division. With respect to the former, Balibar's thought is framed somewhere between Hegel and Spinoza, between the idea of the universal which sublates and overcomes all the particular individuations of race, nation, and class, equaliberty as revolutionary subjectivity, and the idea of a persistent tension between universality, the usefulness of man to man, and particularity, the various figures of political belonging and identity throughout history. There is no guarantee that the various imaginations of race and nation will be displaced by the figure of the citizen. Balibar's other scene is thus closer to Spinoza's dual foundations of the city than to Hegel's dialectic of civil society and the state, a proximity that is paradoxically defined by the passage of history. These two trajectories are resolved into an idea of a politics of transindividuation that focuses on the aporetic of the 'other scene'. As we have seen, the 'other scene' frames the relationship between economics and politics, between the mode of production and the state, and between materiality and imagination. This is Balibar's way of understanding, or reframing, base and superstructure: it is a matter of a constant short-circuit of economic relations on political identities, and vice versa. As Balibar writes, 'Retrospectively, the Marxian short circuit thus appears as the prototype for a more general schema: the pattern of referring back to the material conditions of politics, which is in turn required for the internal political transformation of those conditions'.³⁷ For Balibar, Marx must also be seen as an interruption of Hegel, as one who argued that the conflicts of civil society, of capitalism, do not resolve themselves in the universality of the state, but create their own imaginary identifications and persistent conflicts.³⁸ The contradictions create conflicts without telos or end, conflicts that often revive the history of racial or ethnic belonging rather than resolve themselves in the citizen. As Balibar argues, the Marxist politics of transformation, which focuses on material conditions of political belonging, and the somewhat Hegelian politics

37 Balibar 2002a, p. 11.

38 Balibar 1995a, p. 146.

of recognition, which focuses on the autonomous constitution of political identity, not only constantly short-circuit each other, but also constitute a third figure of politics, one which Balibar calls the 'heteronomy of heteronomy', or politics of civility.³⁹ If the first politics has to do with the material constraints of the labour process, and the second has to do with the legal and institutional definitions of citizenship, this last figure concerns the imaginary identifications and affective relations that define the belongings of race, nation, and sex. Thus, rather than understand the politics of transindividuality as a constant short-circuit between the economic and political, the worker and the citizen, it is one in which the worker and citizen are in turn short-circuited by these identification. A politics of the other scene in which the other scene is always absent, felt only in terms of its effects.

This schema of scenes and their effects is not static, but the general set of relations from which history can be conceptualised. Taking a cue from Balibar's three major epochs, we could say that the problem of the current conjuncture is both the problem of the relationship between the first and second epoch, of the relation between the long history of exploitation and oppression based on race, class, and nation, and the constitution of equaliberty, as these remnants of anthropological difference continue to undermine and complicate the latter. As much as these past exclusions and exploitations are never entirely sublated, never entirely overcome, we also confront the new transformations of political anthropology. These transformations concern both sexual difference, as that which necessarily exceeds any universality, and the labour process, as the division of manual and mental labour is deepened and transformed by the rise of digital knowledge production, calling into question the separation between technology and politics. The transformation of the labour process cannot be examined in isolation: the destruction of economic individuation has effects not only on political subjectivity, but also on race and nation. The increasingly globalised world and the porous nature of every political boundary have led to a proliferation of new, virulent political imaginaries, new attachments to race and nation, what Balibar calls cruelty. Cruelty is a particular form of violence, irreducible to either revolutionary violence or counterrevolutionary suppression, to the politics of emancipation or transformation. Balibar identifies two intersecting forms of cruelty: the first is 'ultra-objective', and it defines the impersonal markets and economic forces which render entire populations expendable, disposable, without a definite plan or decision; the second is what he calls 'ultra-subjective', the violence aimed at populations defined racially,

39 Balibar 2002a, p. 23.

nationally, or ethnically as an existential threat.⁴⁰ As Balibar writes, 'At the moment at which humankind becomes economically and, to some extent, culturally "united", it is violently divided "biopolitically"'.⁴¹ As much as the current epoch can be defined through transformations of both the labour relation and with it the various effects that this relation has on other identities and relations, race and sexuality, and the claims for new identities irreducible to equality, this is not a clean break without residue or remainder. The past persists. It is not just that historical time is differential, but so too are the epochs' individuations that define it.⁴² As Balibar writes,

Let us nonetheless note here that, if these epochs succeed upon one another, or engender one another, they do not supplant one another like the scenes of a play: for us, and consequently in our relation to the political question, they are all still present in a disunified totality, in a noncontemporaneity that is the very structure of the 'current moment', which means that we are simultaneously dealing with the state, with the class struggle, and with anthropological difference.⁴³

Thus, we could argue that these short-circuits are as much temporal as they are transindividual; ideas of racial belonging intersect with and interrupt the modern ideal of citizenship and the contemporary global labour process. It is because we live in conflicting historical moments and traditions, carrying ancient ideals and practices alongside new transformations of economic, technological, and social relations we can barely grasp, that we find ourselves caught between different individuations, modern and ancient, egalitarian and repressive. This is also why the structure of these various relations can only be given in the conjuncture.⁴⁴

Balibar's writing in the conjuncture, a method displayed in his various writings on citizenship, race, and immigration, stands in sharp contrast to Jacques Rancière, who offers a similar schema. Rancière, drawing from Aristotle's claim in the *Politics* that all constitutions are ultimately conflicts between the rich and the poor, argues that politics is less a displacement of economics onto politics, and vice versa, than a process by which both sides are played against the middle. As Rancière writes:

40 Balibar 2010, p. 86.

41 Balibar 2004, p. 130.

42 Althusser 1970b, p. 100.

43 Balibar 1994a, p. 59.

44 Balibar 1996b, p. 115.

The primary task of politics can indeed be precisely described in modern terms as the political reduction of the social (that is to say the distribution of wealth) and the social reduction of the political (that is to say the distribution of various powers and the imaginary investments attached to them). On the one hand, to quiet the conflict of rich and poor through the distribution of rights, responsibilities and controls; on the other, to quiet the passions aroused by the occupation of the centre by virtue of spontaneous social activities.⁴⁵

Every contestation of the distribution of wealth is muted by a distribution of rights that supposedly all can enjoy; every contestation of the unequal access to political power is quelled by the access to the universal good of commercial welfare, of the economic progress of all. In this case the displacements converge on the nullification of political or socio-economic conflict. As Rancière argues, this is 'the art of underpinning the social by means of the political and the political by means of the social'.⁴⁶ Thus as much as Rancière offers a kind of echo of the other scene, as economic conflict is displaced into the universality of rights and political conflicts are nullified by the ideal of universal economic progress, these two scenes are in unity, describing a shared destruction of the political. They define the contemporary 'post-political' order of technocratic neoliberalism and democratic populism. Without necessarily intending to, Rancière updates Marx's critique of the Declaration of the rights of man, only now it is not just a matter of political conflicts being displaced onto the universal rights of man, but of both sides being played against the other as political rights defuse economic conflicts, while economic progress, the distractions of consumer society, defuse political conflict. Despite Rancière's citation of Aristotle (and not Marx), these strategies converge to depict a contemporary picture, describing the neoliberal and technocratic structure of the current state. It could be described as contemporary, but not conjunctural, oriented towards the present but describing it as the effect of an essential structure, rather than a conjunctural transformation. The other scene of Rancière's play is scripted in advance.

As much as Balibar can be understood as developing Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx's critical account of transindividuality, extending Spinoza's fundamental insight that the transition from economic particularity to political universality is always short-circuited by the imaginary identifications, it is not reducible

45 Rancière 1995, p. 14.

46 Rancière 1995, p. 18.

to it. Balibar develops an account of transindividuality that extends its anthropological definition, relating to the various aspects of collective belonging and individual identity from language to the body, as well as its historical determinations from the development of the nation state to the division of labour. It is precisely the tension between these different conditions of individuation that determine the conditions for the various short-circuits, as political individuations come into conflict with those produced by the labour process. Balibar's use and development of the term raises two questions, the first is philosophical or even ontological; it is a question of precisely how to think together these different facets of individuation. This is a question that can be approached on many levels, from an ontology of causes and effects, unity and multiplicity, to a more anthropological or even sociological question of the different and overlapping individuations that can define a given society, a given life at a given time. How is it possible for an individual to see oneself as both a free citizen and subordinate worker, as an individual of the market and a part of the collective labour process? The second question is more historical and political; it is a question provoked by Balibar's definition of the present through the disindividuation of the labour process and the breakdown of the citizen. To what extent is the current conjuncture one in which the dominant figure of political individuation, that of the citizen, is no longer adequate? These questions will be explored in the following chapters. First by turning to Simondon's philosophical investigation of transindividuality in the following chapter. Then by turning to Paolo Virno and Bernard Stiegler's examination of the contemporary economics and politics of individuation in the following chapter.

‘The Obscure Zone’: Individuating Simondon

After exploring what could be called the prehistory of transindividuality in Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx’s critique of the individual, it is now worth turning to the concept as it is developed in the thought of Gilbert Simondon. The goal is not to present Simondon’s thought as the culmination and resolution of the problem of transindividuality as it was glimpsed in Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, but to open up the tension and problems between the different modalities of the problem, not only before and after its explicit articulation, but also in terms of the different philosophical registers, ontological and political. While it is true that examining Simondon’s thought initially moves the investigation from an oblique engagement with the concept, through the critiques of the metaphysics, politics, and political economy of the individual, to a direct engagement with the concept as concept, it is also the case that transindividuality in Simondon crosses new terrains of individuation barely glimpsed in the previous chapter – most notably the emphasis on the pre-individual basis of individuation – while developing the themes of affects, dialectic, and alienation developed in Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx. Thus, the examination of Simondon will return us to the philosophers and problems engaged in the previous chapter, not just in terms of the opposition between an indirect and direct understanding of transindividuality, but in terms of the blind spots which separate and divide the various philosophers. A reading of Simondon, as with any philosopher, is always a resolution of particular tensions and problems as much as it provokes new problems. The task could be described as producing a new individuation of transindividuality, as problems and tensions are resolved into concepts and statements. In this chapter, we will examine Simondon’s development of the concept of transindividuality, its relation to the problem of technology and the field of ontology, as well as particular interpretations and individuations of this concept, examining the tensions and transformations they reveal. These tensions and transformations have made possible different readings, different individuations of Simondon in the thought of Paolo Virno, Bernard Stiegler, and Gilles Deleuze among others. We will also examine Simondon’s intersections with Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, investigating Simondon’s relation to his precursors. The objective is not to produce the one correct reading of transindividuality, in contrast to the various transindividualities *avant la lettre* explored in the previous chapter, but rather to expand the problem of transindividuality, incorporating the pre-

Simondonian problems from the first chapter with Simondon's thought and the post-Simondon investigations of Bernard Stiegler and Paolo Virno in the next chapter.

Transindividuality: From Technology to Ontology (and Back Again)

The term transindividuality is associated immediately with Simondon's *L'Individuation psychique et collective*, which was published posthumously in 1989. This text, which along with *L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* was intended to be part of a larger work, published in 1995 as *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information*, deals explicitly with the problem of transindividuality in the context of both a re-examination of individuality and an articulation of a new thought of social relations. The fact that the two volumes of what was considered by Simondon to be a single work appeared 25 years apart has affected the reception of Simondon's thought: early readers, such as Gilles Deleuze, saw the concept primarily in terms of a general ontology of individuation, related primarily to biology and the physical world, while later readers, such as Étienne Balibar, Bernard Stiegler, and Paolo Virno, focus primarily on transindividuality as a way to conceptualise political and social reality. However, the term transindividuality and its problematics appear first in *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, in terms of a philosophy of technology. The proximity of a thought of social relations with a theory of technology runs throughout Simondon's thought, opening up a third approach concerned primarily with the intersection of individuation and technology explored by Bernard Stiegler.¹ The connection of transindividuality with technology, with tools, machines, and other objects, makes it clear that it is not reducible to a concept of intersubjectivity. Moreover, such a connection continues a thread that we have already glimpsed; in the work of Hegel and Marx, we could see that their specific thought of transindividuality intersected with their reflections on the tool and machine. Hegel argued that even at the most basic level tools constituted a universalisation and discipline of the individual's activity, subjecting it to the same actions and rhythms. Marx radicalises this thesis to argue that not only does the machine render labour transindividual, homogenising the particular efforts with those of others; moreover, it produces and presupposes the general knowledge of society.²

1 Combes 2013, p. 67.

2 Marx 1973, p. 706.

The development of the concept of transindividuality from a philosophy of technology only to be later applied to a philosophy of society is perhaps surprising to some, but this is precisely the presupposition that Simondon is contesting. Society, the interrelation between human beings, is generally considered to be opposed to technology and machinery. Simondon's writings on technology begin from this familiar conflict between culture and technology.³ According to Simondon, we have divided the world of objects into those of beauty, the production of the arts, and those of utility, technology: the first are seen as the material instantiations of that which promotes humanity, promotes culture, while the second are seen as something other than human, alien to culture. Overcoming this divide entails the development of nothing short of a new way of relating to nature, technology, and society, a new technical culture or culture of technology.

It is in this context that Simondon first develops the concept of transindividuality, transindividuality as a fundamental reorganisation of the culture that connects human beings to each other and machines. Transindividuality stands between two extremes. The first is the schema of an individual operating on nature, reshaping nature with a tool. The tool is recognised as subordinate to the individual. The second is that of the machine, which is part of a technological system, a system that displaces the mastery of the individual, incorporating individuals and their tools as part of its general functioning.⁴ Simondon goes so far as to argue that as long as technological development was primarily the development of new tools and new devices for the individual, the idea of progress was unproblematic; it is only with the invention of the machine, as the perfection of the system displaces the individual's mastery, that progress becomes a question.⁵ Simondon's general schema is similar to Marx's general understanding of the development from tools, governed by the schema of an instrument working on an object, to machines, which reduce man and 'his tools' to a part of the machine, a conscious organ of a greater machinery.⁶ Despite the proximity of his understanding of technology to that of Marx, Simondon argues that alienation needs to be expanded beyond a purely economic

3 Simondon 1958, p. 9.

4 Simondon 1958, p. 103.

5 Simondon 1958, p. 116.

6 Marx develops a general schema of the labour process in Chapter Seven of *Capital*. It is defined as a process in which the worker transforms objects through the intermediary of tools. Marx's understanding of the tool here is Promethean. As Marx writes, 'Thus nature becomes one of the organs of his activity, which he annexes to his own bodily organs, adding stature to himself in spite of the Bible' (Marx 1977, p. 285). However, the subsequent chapters

meaning.⁷ For Simondon, alienation is not limited to the question of ownership of the means of production, but includes the entire psychological and social relationship with activity.⁸ This psychological and social alienation stems from a division that is at the heart of technology, a division between the part, the immediate task, and the ensemble, the totality. The alienation thus follows a division between mental and manual labour, between those who grasp the specific elements of the process, and those who grasp the overall ensemble of technology. It is an alienation of both capitalist, or manager, as personification of the process, and of the worker, as personification of the part, the specific use of this or that part of the process.⁹ For Simondon, alienation follows the basic trajectory of western society, according to which a basic unity of form and matter, sense and utility, a unity which can be found in the primitive relation with magic, is increasingly differentiated into different spheres, such as technology and religion, following a logic of specialisation. The machine, with its division between conception and execution, is situated at the end point of this process. As the machine separates part from whole, form from matter, and conception from execution, it leaves both sides of the relation partial and incomplete.¹⁰ This fundamental alienation is the alienation of grasping only one part of this intersection, seeing the part without grasping the whole, or understanding the totality without grasping the parts. The worker and the technician are both alienated from the totality of the labour process.¹¹ As Simondon writes, 'The figure of the unhappy inventor came about at the same time as that of the dehumanized worker; it is its counter-type and it arises from the same cause'.¹²

As much as it is possible to trace the history of transindividuality back to the distinction of tool and machine, both of which offer very different under-

on machinery and large-scale industry displace this schema: it is no longer a matter of man adding organs to his stature, but of man becoming the conscious organ of the machine (Marx 1977, p. 457).

7 As Muriel Combes argues, Simondon rejects Marx based on a purely 'economistic' interpretation of alienation, alienation as loss of property, something which does not fit with the original articulation of the concept in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Combes 2013, p. 74). Moreover, Herbert Marcuse was perhaps the first to incorporate Simondon's writing on technology into a contemporary rewriting of alienation. Alienation is not just alienation from the labour process, but also from the total rationality that defines contemporary society (Marcuse 1964, p. 24).

8 Simondon 1958, p. 118.

9 Simondon 1958, p. 119.

10 Simondon 1958, p. 250.

11 Chabot 2013, p. 39.

12 Simondon 2009, p. 21.

standings of the relation of man to machine, it is worth noting that this distinction reappears in what could be called a post-Simondonian and Marxist context in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between 'machinic enslavement' and 'social subjection'. As Deleuze and Guattari write,

There is enslavement when human beings themselves are constituent pieces of a machine that they compose themselves and with other things (animals, tools), under the control and direction of a higher unity. But there is subjection when the higher unity constitutes the human being as a subject linked to a now exterior object, which can be an animal, a tool, or even a machine. The human being is no longer a component of the machine but a worker, a user. He or she is subjected *to* the machine and no longer enslaved *by* the machine.¹³

Deleuze and Guattari shift the problem from one of the history of technology to one of political and social organisation. It is a question not just of the technical machine, but also of the role that individuals play in the larger social machine. This disrupts the implied progression from tool to machine; as they argue later, the progression from 'machinic enslavement' to 'social subjection' is neither linear nor guaranteed. The demise of the 'megamachines' of ancient societies, which treated individuals as so many cogs, not only gives rise to the subjection of the autonomous worker, but also paves the way for new enslavements. Individuation is less a fact of technology than an effect of the organisation of social relations. Deleuze and Guattari's distinction is still predicated on an opposition between part and totality. Subjection interpellates individuals as individuals, as unities that stand above machines, while enslavement subordinates the various faculties of humanity to parts of larger machines. In Marx's terms, technology makes man a 'conscious organ' of the machine.

Technology thus relates to what Simondon refers to as the 'obscure zone' of our culture, the relation that is not well grasped by the divisions into part and whole, form and matter, genesis and use.¹⁴ The problem of technology, of grasping its specific essence, is then immediately related to another 'obscure zone', that of the individual and society. These two problems, the relation of the individual to technology and of the individual to society, constantly intersect while obscuring each other. Simondon argues that one of the most persistent con-

¹³ Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 457.

¹⁴ Simondon 1958, p. 252.

cepts of individuation, the schema of form and matter, stems from not only a particular technological development, but also a particular division of labour. The hylomorphic schema, the idea of form and matter, which has influenced technology and metaphysics from the time of Aristotle, is itself a product of a society divided between thinkers and executors, between those who are concerned with forms and those concerned with matter.¹⁵ Simondon makes this remark on the social genesis of the various schema of individuation, a thread that runs through his critique of hylomorphism and his theory of technology, but the relationship between ideas and practices is never developed into a social critique.¹⁶ Simondon is at once wary of analogies, such as that of the clay and its mould, which underlie hylomorphism, while at the same time developing a transductive perspective that attempts to grasp both the general structure and the specific difference of the process of individuation.¹⁷

To adequately grasp technology, it is necessary to adequately grasp collectivity, and vice versa.¹⁸ As Simondon writes, 'The technological world is the collective world, which is not adequately thought from the social nor from the psychic'.¹⁹ The technological world is transindividual in that it forms the basis of both individuality and collectivity, of psychic phenomena and social structures. It is in this obscure zone that everything happens, that new technologies are constituted and new collectivities emerge. Thus, in *Du mode d'existence des objet techniques*, transindividuality emerges as a conclusion, as a way to think together creation and use, individuality and the collective. It does so because technology calls into question the putative stability of the individual. It does so, first, as we have seen, by calling into question the unity of the relationship of individual and tool, situating both within a larger process that exceeds them. Technology is the source of both our idea of the human individual, the tool-making animal standing above all of nature, of its undoing in the great machine, real and symbolic, that reduces human beings to mere appendages, a cog in the machine. It is the alpha and omega of the anthropological schema. This undermining of the individual person is further called into question by the individual status of the machine. It is notoriously difficult to define the individual device, or machine; beyond the so-called simple machines, any technological device is made up of multiple components. It is often difficult to draw a line

15 Simondon 2005, p. 56.

16 Sauvagnargues 2012, p. 4.

17 Aspe 2013, p. 66.

18 Simondon 2005, p. 56.

19 Simondon 1958, p. 253.

of demarcation between one device and others. Moreover, the history of technology presents us with both lineages, long trajectories of development, and isolated inventions. Its history, like perhaps all history, is one of gradual perfections and radical events. As the machine develops, its history seems to be determined less by the inventions of individuals than by its own particular perfection and development; it seems to be less the creation of individuals than its own process of individuation.²⁰ A philosophy of technology puts the individual into question, not just the individual person that it displaces and decomposes, but the individual thing or object. Thus in Simondon we find a trajectory from a philosophy of technology to a general problem of individuation. This shift and enlarging of the initial problematic is not a radical break; the general problems of technology and alienation persist throughout Simondon's writing on individuation.

Simondon's writing on individuation returns us to the obscure zone of form and matter, part and whole, but now this obscure zone is a zone of incomprehension as much as alienation. The central critical point of Simondon's work on individuation is that individuation cannot be understood by examining the already constituted individual: the classical schemas of individuation – from the hylomorphic schema of form and matter, to substances, and atomism – obscure the process of individuation, leave in the dark precisely how this form is combined with this matter or why this substance should be considered an individual.²¹ In order to grasp individuation it is necessary to dispense with the already constituted individual as either a starting point or the necessary end point, to see it as a process, a phase of being.²² It is necessary to break the link that connects being with individuation, identifies all being with a being, with the individual, to move from an ontology to an ontogenesis, to an examination of the process of individuation.

Simondon's project is a broad one, considering individuation in its myriad phases, from the physical individuation of crystals, to the individuation of living species and organisms, and finally considering the psychic and collective individuation that defines transindividuality. These are not metaphors or analogies, but different processes of individuation that are examined for both their commonalities and their causal effects on each other. A thorough consideration of the reflections on physics, nature, and psychology would be beyond the scope of the current project, but, at the same time, any attempt to reflect

20 Chabot 2013, p. 12.

21 Simondon 2005, p. 24.

22 Deleuze 2004, p. 86.

on individuation in terms of social and psychological individuation without reflecting on the physical and biological basis of individuation risks making man a kingdom within a kingdom, failing to see the continuity with processes and relations that exceed and situate the individual. (As the wording suggests, it is Simondon's tendency to see individuation as a process running through nature, psyche, and society, to engage in a re-naturalisation of humanity, that perhaps brings his thought in closest proximity to Spinoza, even if, as we will see, this proximity is overlooked by Simondon). It is also from this general process of individuation, and its various phases, that Simondon develops the conceptual vocabulary of individuation. There is an individuation of thought as well: to think is in some sense to individuate a concept from a series of problems and tensions. Thus, Simondon's entire opus, as it crosses physics, biology, psychology, and society, could be considered as an individuation of individuation, the development of an identifiable concept from the problem.²³

For individuation to be a process, to be something other than the entirety of being, there must be something, some dimension of reality, which exists prior to it. This is what Simondon refers to as the pre-individual. The pre-individual is less a thing, some fundamental atomistic reality that provides the basic building block of reality, than it is a relation, or relations. What is pre-individual for Simondon exists in a metastable state, in a relation of flux or tension. The clearest example of this, and the central terrain of Simondon's examination of physical individuation, is the way in which crystals are the crystallisation of a solution, which is to say the individuation of conditions, compounds, and elements that exist initially in flux. What is called pre-individual exists primarily as metastable state, as a set of possibilities and relations: it is a reserve of becoming, not a definite being.²⁴ Individuation is in part the reconciliation of the tensions and potentials of this metastable state. However, it can only ever be partial; individuation does not entirely resolve the pre-individual dimension, nor does it fully individuate or incorporate its conditions. That is to say, the pre-individual is not so much prior, understood as something that comes before individuation, than it is that which exists alongside individuation as a different phase. The persistence of the pre-individual in the individual, the unresolved metastability of the stable body, becomes more and more significant as we cross the threshold from the physical to the biological. A physical thing is by and large inert, it is the product of individuation, a geological or other process that constitutes it, but once constituted it does not individuate itself. The living

²³ Simondon 2005, p. 36.

²⁴ Combes 2013, p. 4.

thing, however, including the human being is not just a result of individuation, it is a 'theatre of individuation', actively individuating itself as much as it has been individuated.²⁵ Biological individuation is never complete, except perhaps in death, and this incompleteness means that the living thing carries with it its own pre-individual phase, its own metastability. As Simondon writes, in a passage that echoes what we have already seen in Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, 'The individualization of the living is its real history'.²⁶ It is a history that is never complete; the last chapter can only be written in death. It is precisely this incompleteness that is carried over into psychic and collective individuation, defining their specific modality.

The specific pre-individual relations that constitute the bases for psychic individuation, for the individuation not of the human individual as living organism, but as a specific individual in terms of character and habit, are sense and affect. Sense and affect are pre-individual, less discernible states than tensions and possibilities, and as such they constitute the two major axes, one oriented towards the exterior world (space), the other towards the interior world (time), through which the individuation takes place. To argue that they are pre-individual is to argue that they are not immediately experienced as the perception of individual things or of defined emotional states, but of relations defined by constitutive tensions. In sense, what is perceived is neither form nor matter, neither intelligible totalities nor raw flow of experience, but information. This information is always supersaturated, there is always more colour, sound, shapes, images, lines, smells, and so on, than we can perceive.²⁷ What we perceive, what becomes discernible, refers us back to a vital subject, to desires and actions. Perception, the constitution of discernible objects and forms, is a product of this relation between subject and world: it is a transductive individuation in which both the world and subject are individuated.²⁸ The contradictions and complexities of sense are overcome as discernible things just as the living individual takes on distinct goals. A similar process defines affect. In affect, the problematic dimension is torn between the polarities of pleasure and pain, which define the basic orientation of affect, a polarity that shifts in different relations and different situations. Pleasure and pain are always shifting, always relative to specific relations and situations. In order for this flux to

25 Simondon 2005, p. 29.

26 Simondon 2005, p. 268.

27 Simondon 2005, p. 242.

28 Transduction is the process by which something is individuated and individuates itself, in which something is both product and process (Combes 2013, p. 7).

become stable, for distinct emotions to emerge from this flux of pleasure and pain, there must be unity and individuation.

Sensation and affects are increasingly individuated, as their tensions give way to discernible perceptions and emotions. As Simondon writes, 'Emotions are the discovery of the unity in living just as perception is the discovery of unity in the world; these two psychic individuations prolong the individuation of the living, they complement it, and perpetuate it'.²⁹ Affects and sensations are individuated into emotions and perceptions, an individuation that transforms both the world, creating distinct things with corresponding evaluations, and constitutes an individual from the inchoate perceptions and desires. In Simondon's terms, they constitute a subject. Simondon's use of this term is somewhat eccentric to the history of philosophy. For Simondon, the term subject is primarily used to express that the process of psychic individuation, the individuation of affects and senses into emotions and perceptions, is never complete. There is a dimension of pre-individual, of unresolved affects and sensual excess, at the heart of any psychic individuation. As Simondon writes, 'a subject is an individual and other than an individual'.³⁰ This alterity at the core of the self is the precondition of the subsequent individuations, the history that defines a given psychic individuation, its specific temperament, but this individuation is not a simple linear progression. The process of psychic individuation is discontinuous, punctuated by crises of anxiety, by transformations of the entire affective and emotional sensibility of the individual.³¹

For Simondon, affects are less individuated, more pre-individual, than emotions. It is perhaps Simondon, and not Spinoza, who is the basis for Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's distinction between affects and emotions, a distinction that stresses the exterior relation of affect to the interiorised relation of emotion. As Deleuze and Guattari write, 'For the affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel'.³² Following Deleuze and Guattari, there has been a tendency to identify affect with the social and emotion with the individual. However, what Simondon makes clear is that affect and emotion are best grasped as two different phases of individuation; the first as more pre-individual, defined more by tensions, and the second more individual, and individuated, as it defines not only particular definable and named states, but also a particular perspective. Emotions are named; they are

29 Simondon 2005, p. 260, my translation.

30 Simondon 2005, p. 253, my translation.

31 Simondon 2005, p. 268.

32 Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 240.

identified and identify us. As Jameson argues, suggesting a different division between affect and emotions, emotions are the states that we can name, while affects remain unidentified 'feelings'. For Jameson's feelings are less individuated as interior states than as historical possibilities.³³ If it is not possible to identify the emotion with subjectivity then it is also not possible to identify collectivity with affect. Both the affective and emotional dimensions play a fundamental role in the constitution of collectivity. As Simondon writes:

If one is able to speak in a certain sense of the individuality of a group or such and such a people, it is not by virtue of a community of action, too discontinuous to be a solid base, nor of the identity of conscious representations, too large and too continuous to permit the segregation of groups; it is at the level of affective-emotional themes, mixtures of representation and action, that constitute collective groups.³⁴

If the collective is to have any individuality at all, this individuality must be sought at the level of particular affects and emotions, particular ways of feeling and perceiving the world, which is often tied to particular objects. In place of the rigid distinction between affects and emotions, in which one is social and the other individual, Simondon argues that both individuals and collectives are constituted by affects and emotions; which is to say that individuals individuated as subjects and individuals individuated as collectives are constituted through the pre-individual dimension of affects, and their increasing individuation into emotional evaluations. Collectives are defined by their structures of feeling.³⁵

For Simondon, the distinctions between sensation and affects, perception and emotions, is just as important as the distinction between affects and emotions, if not more so. The transition from affect to emotion is a progression of individuation, as is the transition from sensation to perception. The problem has to do with the relation between these two individuations, one interior, the other exterior. As such they correspond to two different orders without any shared condition or necessary connection. Individuation is always constituted of two conditions, energetic and structural. In psychic individuation,

33 Jameson 2014, p. 1.

34 Simondon 2005, p. 248, my translation.

35 The reference here is to Raymond Williams's influential concept of 'structure of feeling', used to understand the way in which culture is less about discernible representations or worldviews than it is defined by what eludes definition, a way of perceiving or feeling (Williams 1977, p. 132).

energetic refers to affects, while structure refers to perceptions.³⁶ The relation between affects and sensations, emotions and perceptions, is always problematic, defined as much by tensions as by correspondences. Co-ordinating the two series demands another individuation, an individuation that exceeds the purely psychic. As Simondon writes, 'a mediation between perceptions and emotions is conditioned by the domain of the collective or transindividual'.³⁷ Perceptions and emotions are often in tension and contradiction; what we perceive does not always correspond with what we feel. Collectivity, shared meaning and structure of feeling, reconciles and reinforces the relation between feeling and perceptions.³⁸ Collectivity continues and completes psychic individuation.

Transindividuality for Simondon is not just the constitution of collectivity, something existing above and beyond the individual, but is also the constitution of individuality. Transindividuality is always the constitution of the individual and the collective; it is always a transindividual individuation and the constitution of collectivity. Or, more to the point, it is because the individual subject is never complete, never identical with itself, that every individuation is both an individuation of subjectivities and collectivities, a transindividual individuality. Transindividuality is not intersubjectivity: it is not a relation between constituted subjects, but rather a relation between the constitutive conditions of subjects.³⁹ It exceeds individuation. Simondon argues that such individuals, individuals that are fully individuated, would require no relations, no further individuation. Transindividuality is not a relation between individuals, but a relation of individuation. Intersubjectivity, the relation between already individuated individuals, relations that pass through their assigned functions and roles, often obscures and masks the transindividual dimension. The transindividual exceeds the collective while being its condition, just as the pre-individual exceeds the individual while being its condition. Transindividuality is not just something that takes place in those moments that are easy to describe as social, the struggle for recognition or affective relations between individuals, but is present even in those moments that are isolated and cut off from others.⁴⁰ Even in these moments, collective structures of feeling and affects persist as problems. Transindividuality is the sociality at the heart of isolation.

36 Aspe 2013, p. 75.

37 Simondon 2005, p. 261.

38 Chabot 2013, p. 98.

39 Simondon 2005, p. 278.

40 Combes 2013, p. 37.

Simondon underscores this asocial dimension of transindividuality, its reality beyond the opposition of the individual and the collective, by arguing that transindividuality is the basis for religion and even 'spirit'. For Simondon, the source of religion is not society, but the transindividual.⁴¹ Which is to say that religion is not to be found at the level of the relations between individuals, but at the level of the affective-emotional sensibilities that constitute the basis for individuality and collectivity. The different valuations, the different affective-emotive complexes that define each society and individual temperament, such as wisdom, heroism, or virtue, are different organisations, different individualisations, of this transindividual dimension of spirituality.⁴² They define an aspect of existence that is simultaneously individual and collective, passing between the two, and defining them according to the predominance of representation, action, or affectivity.⁴³ They are each different figures of 'spirituality', of transindividuality, of the articulation of the relation between collective ways of feeling and perceiving and the individual's way of making sense of the world. Just as individuation has two sides, energetic and structural, affects/emotions and sense/perception, the transindividual is both objective and subjective, defined by institutions and values, structures and meanings.⁴⁴

There is no doubt that Simondon's concept of transindividuality breaks with accepted understandings of individuality and collectivity, moving beyond the tendency to see the relation between individual and collective as a zero-sum game. Simondon is critical not just of the individual and individualism, but also of collectivity conceived of as nothing other than an individual, a culture or society, made up of other individuals. Which is to say that as much as Simondon is critical of the individual, especially of the individual taken as its own explanatory principle, he is just as critical of the interindividual, of collectivity understood as nothing more than a collection of individuals. Simondon argues that collectivity is often understood in terms of a functional relation between individuals, as interindividual rather than transindividual. Which is to say that his thought is poised equally against the reduction of collectivity to individuality, as well as the reduction of individuality to collectivity. The individual is nothing other than an individuation of its pre-individual conditions, but these conditions still exceed it, making possible other individuations. In a similar manner, a culture is nothing other than transindividuality, but transindividu-

41 Simondon 2005, p. 280.

42 Aspe 2013, p. 208.

43 Simondon 2005, p. 282.

44 Aspe 2013, p. 208.

ality exceeds any delimited culture, any objectivation into values and ideals.⁴⁵ Simondon's critique is not just against the individual, but against anything that would reduce collectivity to a relation between individuals or to some totality standing above individuals.

As much as Simondon breaks with the 'spontaneous philosophy of individualism', his thought runs up against its own limits in framing the social dimensions of transindividuality. This tension can be seen in the points where Simondon maps his concepts and his conceptual innovations onto such ideas as spirit and nature. As Simondon argues, with some reservation, the entire series of phases from the pre-individual to the transindividual can be mapped onto nature, individual, and spirit:

The being of the subject can be conceived as a more or less coherent system of three phases of being: pre-individual, individuated, transindividual, corresponding partially but not completely to that which is indicated by the concepts of nature, individual, spirituality.⁴⁶

On one level, this is the problem of any novel philosophical concept, of any neologism: as much as any new concept breaks with existing ways of thinking, which are, as Simondon argues, also ways of individuating phenomena and relations, it must be placed back into the existing concepts and distinctions, transforming them. Simondon's central polemical targets are the individual and the collective, especially as they are understood to be mutually exclusive, and it is in light of this conceptual rupture that the vocabulary of pre-individual and transindividual is developed. However, in defining these terms, he also draws on and transforms such concepts as spirit, nature, technology, and religion. Simondon develops such analogies to explain his terms, situating pre-individual, individuation, and transindividual in relation to such canonical terms as nature, subject, and culture, while simultaneously redefining the implicitly conceptual problematic that underlies such terms. This simultaneous explication and transformation works in two directions at once, clarifying the new vocabulary while destabilising the received vocabulary of nature, culture, and technology. The established meanings of these terms are more often than not mired in the problem of individuation. As we have seen, technology vacillates between the tool, considered as the expression of the individual, and that machine, which makes the individual merely one of its parts.

45 Krtolica 2012, p. 81.

46 Simondon 2005, p. 310, my translation.

In a similar sense, concepts such as nature and spirit are often seen as simply meta-individuals with their own intentions and teleology. However, these two directions, defining and displacement, are in tension, and there is always the risk that the existing concept, with its inherited meanings, problematics, and metaphysical baggage, will drag the new concept into familiar territory. This is perhaps nowhere more the case than with respect to nature and spirit as corollaries of pre-individual and transindividual. The risk is not just the immense history that is caught up in the terms nature and spirit, but also the teleology that runs from the other: nature is the raw material, the undefined precondition of spirit. This obscures one of Simondon's other central points, that as much as the pre-individual functions as the basis of the transindividual, it does so as something of an immanent cause, coexisting with that which it causes.⁴⁷ It is not a matter of a gradual individuation from pre-individual to transindividual passing through the individual as its mediation, but of the intersection of different individuations, psychic and collective. To put it otherwise, if the pre-individual constitutes the affective, emotional, and perceptual basis for the individuation of both subjects and collectivities, then this pre-individual dimension is not some nature, outside of culture and history, but is also a part and product of culture and history. It is both the condition and effect of collective and individual individuations. The linear progression from nature to spirit, a progression that passes through the work and constitution of the individual, needs to be placed back onto a rectilinear trajectory in which nature is becoming spirit and spirit is becoming nature. Individuation is a relation not just with nature, but also with technology, society, and history.

Individuating Simondon

The transductive relation between the concepts of pre-individual, individuated, and transindividual and their corresponding terms of nature, individual, and spirit, opens up a wide variety of possible readings. These readings exist in the tension between Simondon's neologisms and the inherited philosophical problems of nature, society, and technology. As such they all could be considered different individuations of Simondon's conceptual problems, and different resolutions of this tension. With respect to the first of the concepts, the pre-individual, Alberto Toscano has mapped out three different possible readings of Simondon's text, all of which return us to the relations between

47 Simondon 2005, p. 317.

individual and society, man and technology.⁴⁸ The first is to be found in the work of Paolo Virno, the second in the work of Muriel Combes, and the third in the work of Gilles Deleuze. (To which we could add Bernard Stiegler, whom, along with Paolo Virno, we will consider in more detail in the next chapter). These different interpretations are not simply debates on the correct meaning of Simondon's concepts and terms, but attempts to cross the very terrain of these neologisms, to break with the old language of nature and spirit, while at the same time rewriting it according to the problem of individuation.

Toscano argues that Paolo Virno's engagement with Simondon is predicated on interpreting the pre-individual as a kind of individual potential. The three formations of the pre-individual that Virno outlines – language, habits, and the mode of production – all constitute a kind of reservoir of capacities. It is possible to say, as Antonio Negri has argued, that Virno views the pre-individual as a kind of faculty, as some ahistorical aspect of subjectivity.⁴⁹ Toscano's interpretation and Negri's critique underscore the question of the anthropological dimension of the pre-individual and the transindividual, raising the following question: Is the former simply another word for the basic components of human nature, sensation, thought, and language, and the latter just another term for culture? Culture would be nothing other than an interpretation, and thus the individuation, of a given natural faculty. Virno's response, albeit indirectly, is to rethink the relationship between the components of human existence and their cultural transformation. The basic components of human existence, language, customs, and habits, are, as Virno argues, both historical and natural.⁵⁰ They are natural because they have at their basis certain natural components of humankind as *homo sapiens*, whether it be the basic physiology that makes speech possible or the lack of instinctual determination that makes habits, customs, and culture defining aspects of humanity. These aspects of human existence have nature as their precondition, but they can only be realised historically, in the formation of specific languages and cultures. Reframing this in Simondon's terms we could say that natural, or physiological, individuation is undetermined, inherently problematic; it sets the terms that become the basis for psychic and collective individuation. Languages, cultures, and habits are individuations of this natural potential, a potential that is made of both positive characteristics, such as the biological capacity for speech, and a lack of characteristics or determination. 'The collective is

48 Toscano 2007, p. 2.

49 Casarino and Negri 2008, p. 128.

50 Virno 2008, p. 49.

the sphere in which the pre-individual becomes the transindividual'.⁵¹ Virno's historico-natural institutions, such as language, fashion, and customs, are simultaneously pre-individual and transindividual, as much as their existence is based upon natural conditions these conditions can only be actualised in relations, relations that are necessarily social and historical.⁵² The biological capacity to speak or to develop habits require others and social relations to be actualised. The split between potentials and actualisation, nature and history, may or may not save Virno from the charge of positing the pre-individual as a kind of faculty, but it complicates it. Moreover, Virno argues that the contemporary historical conjuncture is defined by a profound mutation in the relation of nature to history, as human nature, the capacity to take on languages and habits, becomes a central aspect of contemporary production (this point will be returned to in the next chapter).

There are broad similarities between Virno and Balibar, similarities that are perhaps explained by their shared project of not only a transindividual social ontology, but also a kind of philosophical anthropology 'after the death of man'. In such an anthropology, the invariants that could count as 'human nature', as a generic definition of the human (language, embodiment, habits, etc.), exist only in and through their specific historical actualisation or individuation. Human nature exists only in and through its effects or, more accurately, through its capacity to be affected. As we saw in the previous chapter, for Balibar this redefinition of the very concept of essence is drawn from Spinoza's assertion that 'desire is man's very essence'. Desire proves to be an essence that only exists, only manifests itself, in specific and determined strivings. As we will see, Virno draws less from Spinoza than from early twentieth-century philosophical writers on philosophical anthropology, such as Arnold Gehlen who stressed humankind's absence of instinctual determination. This 'negative essence' is then combined with a structuralist assertion of the differential basis of language, culture, and habits to define an essence that exists only in and through its different articulations.⁵³ This essence is then less the natural bedrock of a culture, causally determining it, than the necessity of contingency, the idea that human nature can only exist in and through specific institutions. These institutions have no other ground than their historical taking place, no other basis than the differences that separate them from others. The nature, the essence, being realised through various practices has no existence outside the practices,

⁵¹ Virno 2009, p. 65.

⁵² Virno 2008, p. 46.

⁵³ Virno 2008, p. 19.

institutions, and relations between them that realise it.⁵⁴ As Marx writes, the reality of the human essence exists not as an abstraction inherent in each individual, but as 'the ensemble of social relations'.⁵⁵

Muriel Combes resolves the tension between the pre-individual and the transindividual in a fundamentally different way. Arguing against the tendency to quickly identify transindividuality with collectivity, she insists on the 'intimacy of the common'. Combes reminds us that Simondon was concerned with 'psychic' and 'collective' individuation, emphasising the conjunction 'and' where most would posit an 'or'; these two processes that cannot be understood in isolation or sequence, but must be thought together, as psychic and collective individuation, as a relation of relations. A collective individuation is not added to, or secondary to, individuation, but constitutive of it. This constitutive role is made possible by the excess of the pre-individual to the individual, that the individual never fully resolves the pre-individual relations that constitute it. This excess intermittently manifests itself in the form of crises, a kind of anxiety, which is nothing other than the recognition of the contingency of individuation.⁵⁶ For Combes, the excess of the pre-individual then makes possible an understanding of the paradox of transindividuality, that far from being simply a new thought of sociality and social relations, of collectivity, transindividuality has to be thought of as a fundamental relation of the psychic to the collective, a relation that is often manifested in the most seemingly intimate acts of perception and feeling.

Bernard Stiegler's reading of Simondon (which we will deal with at length in the next chapter, along with Virno) can also be understood as a rearticulation of the relation of the pre-individual and the transindividual. Like Virno, he sees this relation as the articulation of nature and history. However, Stiegler's primary insistence, his primary critique of Simondon, is his assertion that the pre-individual, the language, habits, and customs that form the basis of individuation, primarily exist in the form of texts, artefacts, and other technological inscriptions of memory. The pre-individual is not nature, existing as some inchoate set of drives and potentials, nor is it simply mediated by culture, by its historical organisation in transindividual relations, but it exists in the form of writing, tools, and recordings that form the basis of our experience and history.⁵⁷ For Stiegler, Simondon's development of a theory of individuation, as a formation of psychic and collective individuation, needs to be

54 Balibar 1995b, p. 30.

55 Marx and Engels 1970, p. 122.

56 Combes 2013, p. 33.

57 Stiegler 2006a, p. 334.

complemented by a theory of the integral role of technology in individuation, understood as any externalisation of memory.⁵⁸ Individuation is not just a relation between an 'I', what Simondon called psychic individuation, and a 'we', or collective individuation, without also being a relation with a 'what', with a culture that exists in terms of its materiality and reproducibility. Stiegler can thus be understood as developing a strong connection between Simondon's early work on technology and the later work on individuation. For Stiegler, technology, understood in its broadest sense as artifice, is the condition of individuation.⁵⁹

Virno's, Combes's, and Stiegler's readings of Simondon hinge on the question of the relation between seemingly different or disparate aspects of human existence, such as nature and history, intimacy and collectivity, or technology and subjectivity. As such each reading foregrounds the distance that separates Simondon's thought from either a philosophical anthropology or a philosophy of society; however, this distance is constantly collapsing. The question is then in part how we understand the relation between these different orders, natural and historical, intimate and common, culture and technology. Deleuze's reading of Simondon suggests that it is precisely the disparate tension between different orders that defines the pre-individual.

Gilbert Simondon has shown recently that individuation presupposes a prior metastable state – in other words, the existence of disparateness as such as at least two orders of magnitude or two scales of heterogeneous reality between which potentials are distributed. Such a preindividual state nevertheless does not lack singularities: the distinctive or singular points are defined by the existence and distribution of potentials.⁶⁰

Individuation is a resolution or a response to this disparate tension, which defines the field of a problem. Toscano argues that this emphasis on the disparate constitutes a new reading of Simondon, one set apart from Virno's emphasis on potential and Combes's emphasis on the intimacy of the common. It is possible to view Deleuze's reading as stressing or emphasising what was already or would become problematic in Virno's, Stiegler's, and Combes's readings. Against the tendency to set up a relation of resemblance or identity that would make the pre-individual resemble the natural faculties of man, in

58 Stiegler 2012, p. 100.

59 Aspe 2013, p. 156.

60 Deleuze 1994, p. 246.

the case of Virno, or the transindividual resemble technology, in the case of Stiegler, Deleuze argues that individuation is a process that passes between the non-identity of nature and society. Deleuze stresses the metastability of individuation, its emergence from disparate affects and sensations.

It is important to stress that Deleuze is drawing from Simondon's earlier work; he cites *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* and not *L'Individuation psychique et collective* (which was not published until 1989), and while it might have been possible that the manuscript was available to him, he does not cite or make use of the concept of the transindividual. Deleuze's reading of Simondon situates it within a general problem of ontogenesis and not a specific problem of psychic and collective individuation. Which is not to say that this problem is absent from Deleuze's thought. It is possible to argue that Deleuze's political thought (with and without Guattari) is intimately concerned with the relation between the pre-individual and the transindividual. This is what informs his critique of psychoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipus*, a discipline that he and Guattari fault for presupposing the individual as the necessary basis and organising principle of desire. In its place Deleuze and Guattari argue for a conception of desire that is simultaneously pre-individual, originating in connections and relations that are not structured around persons, what they call desiring production, and transindividual, passing through the relations of production; as Deleuze and Guattari insist, 'desire is part of the infrastructure'.⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari's refusal of the explanatory powers of a certain Freud and a certain Marx has to do with precisely their understanding of individuation. Deleuze and Guattari's objection to Freud and psychoanalysis is that it begins with precisely that which it should explain, the individuation of desire. Despite psychoanalysis's emphasis on drives and partial objects, the Oedipus complex is the priority of already constituted individuals over constitutive relations. Deleuze and Guattari are less critical of Marx, but are critical of Marxist conceptions of subjectivity that privilege the organising collectives of class, failing to examine the way in which the large aggregates of class and nation are constituted by desire, by the organisation of the pre-individual. What both these overlook, and what Deleuze and Guattari emphasise through their insistence on the social nature of desire, is that desire, which is to say the formative and productive nature of subjectivity, is constantly passing below the individual, in the pre-individual flows of desire, and above the individual, in the transindividual organisations of production.⁶²

61 Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 351.

62 Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 293.

The displacement of the individual as cause and organising principle of social production and reproduction opens up the problem of the relation between what is first termed 'desiring production' and 'social production', and, in later works, molecular and molar. These two orders could be understood to roughly correspond to the pre-individual, especially as the former was defined as encompassing perceptions and affects, and transindividual, especially as far as the former was understood to encompass the assemblages that organise and territorialise the pre-individual perceptions.⁶³ Deleuze's initial articulation of individuation as a problem posed between two disparate orders is transformed in his later (collaborative) works into the understanding of collective and psychic individuation as passing between the disparate orders of the molecular and molar. The general ontological problem becomes the basis for a political and economic critique.

The different phases of the critique are framed differently, posing different ways of understanding the intersection between transindividuality and political critique. In *Anti-Oedipus*, the general emphasis is towards an opposition between the molar and the molecular. This is framed initially in the opening passages that define every socius, every social formation, as engendering a 'full body', a representation of social relations, that appears not as the effect of productive relations but as their precondition.⁶⁴ Deleuze and Guattari are drawing from Marx, from the passages in the *Grundrisse* on 'Pre-capitalist Economic Formations'. Marx argues that every form of production generates an 'inorganic body', an image of a body that appears not as the result of production but as its necessary precondition.⁶⁵ Deleuze and Guattari combine this assertion with the general idea of a fetish, of that which appears to be a cause rather an effect of production, effectively effacing its conditions. Society itself, and not just its specific commodities, is the fetish.⁶⁶ The task of schizoanalysis is then defined as liberating the molecular from the molar, turning away from the large aggregates, state, society, and the various collectivities, and towards the molecular dimension of desire. In *Anti-Oedipus*, the opposition of molecular and molar, of desiring production and social production, is critically turned towards the former, liberating the molecular from the molar representations that contain it. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, there is a complication of this opposition. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, states and economies are as much molecular as they are molar; the state and capitalism are as much molecular,

63 Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 213.

64 Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 10.

65 Marx 1973, p. 490.

66 Read 2009a, p. 89.

concerning desire, perceptions, and relations, as they are molar.⁶⁷ The molecular is less something to be liberated from the molar, from the large collective aggregates of nation and class, than that which constitutes them on a different register. The difference here is one of emphasis, rather than an absolute break, but it is one that continues through Deleuze and Guattari's thought. One of Deleuze's later texts, one that plays a central role in thinking about political and economic critique, 'Postscript on Control Societies', is the culmination of this tendency. It is not just that the molecular, the pre-individual realm of perceptions, desires, and belief, functions as one terrain of the organisation of power, but becomes its primary terrain. Contemporary capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari argue, operates primarily on pre-individual perceptions, affects, and relations rather than bounded subjects.

In the following chapter, we will return to transindividuality as a critique of political economy, drawing together Marx and Hegel's critique with the work of Virno and Stiegler, re-examining the question of the relationship between transindividuality and capitalism (returning to Deleuze and Guattari in Chapter 4). Before doing so, however, we will briefly examine the intersections between Simondon's thought and the work of Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx. The point is not to assess to what extent these (pre-emptive) articulations of transindividuality are correct or incorrect according to Simondon. It is more a matter of developing a transindividual perspective in which the lacunae and hesitations are as important as the assertions and concepts. Simondon reads Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx for the failures to break through the 'spontaneous philosophy of the individual', for maintaining the idea of the individual, or for erecting nature, society or the economy into an individual writ large. As much as Simondon subjects Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx to critique, it is also possible to reverse the terms of examination, and analyse to what extent the critical conception sheds light on a political dimension of transindividuality overlooked by Simondon's ontological investigation.

Affect, Contradiction, Alienation: Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx Revisited

If the promise and limit of Simondon's thought is to be found in relation to the concepts and categories of a general cultural inheritance, nature, spirit, etc., which he redefines, it is possible to then ask the question as to where his con-

67 Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 213.

ceptual innovations stand with respect to the three transindividual thinkers we have identified in the previous chapter. First, in terms of their attempts to rewrite this tradition of concepts and problems, to redefine nature, subject, and spirit, to think these concepts outside of an implied ontology of the individual. Second, in terms of what we have identified as a critical conception of transindividuality, a conception which is critical in precisely its ability to grasp the paradox of a transindividual individualism, the social, historical, and political production of the isolated individual. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this critical account of transindividuality is framed against specific objects and interventions; Spinoza's critique of religion and the anthropological imaginary, Hegel's critique of civil society and the idea of the isolated individual, and Marx's critique of capital and the bourgeois individual of exchange are all related to specific conjunctures, specific individuations. Thus, the intersection between Simondon and Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx will make it possible to explore the relation between a general ontology, or ontogenesis, of individuation, and the specificity of different critiques of individuation. My objective in what follows is neither to critique nor affirm Simondon's engagement with his precursors, I take it as a given that philosophers often function in a blind spot with respect to their similarities, but to examine the critique and similarity of their positions in order to expand and define the concept of transindividual.⁶⁸

Of the three figures considered in the previous chapter, Spinoza is perhaps the one that Simondon references the most. However, Simondon does not primarily see Spinoza as a precursor, at least an unproblematic one. For Simondon, Spinoza is an illustration of the fundamental problem of any critique of individualism, the aforementioned tendency to displace the individual, the human individual, only by subsuming it into what is ultimately a larger individual. Spinoza subsumes the individual into nature. Despite this tendency for Simondon not to recognise Spinoza as a precursor, many writers, most notably Balibar but also Muriel Combes, recognise a strong overlap between Spinoza and Simondon. As Balibar argues in an essay on Alexandre Mathéron, with respect to Spinoza and Simondon, 'The convergence of these two analyses is made all the more remarkable in that Simondon denies all debt towards Spinoza, who he, in a traditional manner, sees as a pantheist philosopher, abolishing the individual as such.'⁶⁹ This overlap deals primarily with transindividuality, but it is not limited to it. It is even possible to speak of a general overlap between the two thinkers, or at least their reception, since the

68 Deleuze 1988, p. 42.

69 Balibar 1996, p. 37, my translation.

concept of transindividuality has become a standard terminology in readers of Spinoza from Yves Citton to Antonio Negri and it is not uncommon for readers of Simondon to invoke Spinoza's relation of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* to describe the process by which an individual is both the effect and cause of a process of individuation. As Balibar argues, Spinoza's understanding of nature as simultaneously *natura naturata*, or nature as effect, and *natura naturans*, or nature as cause, posits nature as necessarily made up of both individuals and the process of individuation.⁷⁰ It is in some sense Simondon's concept of transindividuality that has made possible a reading of Spinoza that neither is one of individual striving nor reduces individuality to a part of the totality of nature.

Simondon sees that Spinoza is a critic of the individual, both in terms of the isolated individual and in terms of the anthropocentric conception of God. However, Spinoza's solution to both of these problems is to situate them in terms of the immanent relations that constitute and exceed them, articulating a concept of nature as that which exceeds and constitutes individuals. For Simondon, however, this nature remains all too individual. Spinoza's error is 'not anthropomorphism, but the individuation of the transindividual'.⁷¹ Spinoza has dispensed with the man as a 'kingdom within a kingdom' as well as the anthropomorphic god, but the individuality understood as the general intelligibility of what exists is much more difficult to evade. Spinoza has dispensed with God's semblance to human beings, God's anger has been reduced to a literary allusion, and even God's wisdom and power are radically redefined as nothing other than the immanent unfolding of nature. However, in doing so, nature, or a substance, has become the only individual. Ultimately, Simondon argues that Spinoza makes substance into a thing as something stable, not a relation or metastable relation.⁷² Simondon's critique follows a long tradition of critiques of Spinoza, the most famous example of which is Hegel, in which individuals, finite bodies and minds, are not individuated in themselves, but aspects of substance, which remains the only individual.⁷³

70 Balibar 1997b, p. 9. With respect to the former, see the essays collected in the volume *Spinoza et les sciences sociales*, edited by Yves Citton and Frédéric Lordon. With respect to the latter, see many of the entries in *Gilbert Simondon: une pensée de individuation et de la technique*.

71 Simondon 2005, p. 283.

72 Simondon 2005, p. 326.

73 This becomes clearest in the passage that Simondon dedicates to Spinoza in *Histoire de la notion d'individu* included as the appendix to *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* (Simondon 2005, p. 448).

Much of the contemporary writing on Spinoza would argue that such an interpretation overlooks the radical nature of Spinoza's immanence, an immanence that would have as its logical conclusion the idea of a substance that does not exist apart from its modes. Nature is not an individual, but a process of individuation.⁷⁴ However, such a response overlooks two of the real problems underscored by Simondon's critique. First, as we have already noted, the opposition between the individual and totality is a persistent metaphysical opposition, one which is overdetermined with a political opposition. Simondon's critique of Spinoza is not just another in a long line of accusations of pantheism, but specifically addresses the difficulty of thinking through the problem of transindividuality, of thinking the relations as constitutive of individuals and the totality.⁷⁵ Second, the implication of Simondon's critique that substance is too stable, too much of a thing, turns us to another problem of not only Spinoza's thought, but all immanent material critiques, the problem of determinism of the constitution of the new. For Simondon, novelty, the creation of new individuals and new relations, stems from metastability, from the unresolved pre-individual relations of any given individual. Thus, the critique of the substantiality of the pre-individual, its determination as a set of causal conditions, is a critique of the foreclosure of the possibility of change and transformation.

Simondon's critique of Spinoza can be dissipated somewhat, if not entirely dispelled, by turning to their strong point of similarity, the affects.⁷⁶ For both Spinoza and Simondon, affects are the basic constitutive elements of transindividuality. They are the conditions of the constitution of both collective identity and individual striving. With respect to the former, Spinoza's assertion of the affective foundation of collectivity articulates the same basic problem in Simondon. As Spinoza writes,

Since men, as we have said, are led more by passion than by reason, it naturally follows that a people will unite and consent to be guided as

74 Balibar 1996, p. 36.

75 Antonio Negri argues that this tendency to think in terms of unity could be understood as the 'Judeo-Christian' tendency. 'Yet this formidable mixture of the critical and constructive elements does not manage to avoid in a definitive manner that point of the Judeo-Christian tradition in which all experience is brought back to unity. To expropriate God of its creativity is not decisive, if we allow creativity to be defined by the unity of the creative project. By doing so we make the divinity worldly but do not eliminate it' (Negri 1999, p. 308).

76 Sharp 2011, p. 40.

if by one mind not at reason's prompting but through some common emotion, such as a common hope, or common fear, or desire to avenge some common injury.⁷⁷

Spinoza and Simondon's reasons for rejecting a rational constitution of collectivity are different, but they are in general agreement that collectives are constituted in and through affects. Spinoza's argument could be described as anthropological, in that it refers to the fundamental finitude of human existence; affects constitute collectives because human beings are led more by passion than by reason. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this finitude is only partial; there is a rational basis for collectivity as well, the usefulness of man to man. Rational utility is not something everyone can grasp, nor can it be constant; the collective needs an affective and imaginary supplement to the rational pact. Simondon's argument for the affective, or rather affective-emotional, basis of collectivity refers not to the fundamental divide between reason and emotion, but to the degree of individuation. A collective cannot be constituted by action, since actions are too discontinuous to provide the basis for collective identity. Nor is a collective constituted by representations, which demand too much uniformity of thought. Rather it is constituted by affect and emotions, by the intersection of the pre-individual and transindividual. Simondon's assertion makes a distinction between affects and emotions, between two different levels of individuation. Such a distinction is missing in Spinoza. At the same time, however, Spinoza adds a political dimension to this identification of affects and collectivity, a dimension of the constitution and dissolution of collectivities. As we saw in Chapter 1, Spinoza argues that 'nature creates individuals, not nations, and it is only the difference of language, of laws, and of established customs that divides individuals into nations'.⁷⁸ Deleuze and Guattari argue that there are two different accounts of individuation in Spinoza: individuation understood as a particular constitution, a particular relation of motion and rest; and individuation understood as a particular capacity to affect and be affected.⁷⁹ The same is true of collectives. As much as a nation can be defined as a set of particular relations of individuals, defined by customs and laws, it is equally important to think of a collective as singular, defined by its shared capacity to act and react, by its affects.⁸⁰ Thus, it is possible to recognise two individuations defining anything like a nation or other collectivity. There

77 Spinoza 2000, p. 64.

78 Spinoza 2001, p. 200.

79 Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 257.

80 Matheron 1969, p. 346.

is the individuation of nation defined by the particular relations between individuals, the laws and regulations, which, like natural laws, establish or attempt to establish a particular relation between motion and rest between the individual bodies that compose the state. It is the relation that this kept constant as particular individuals pass in and out of the state. The collective is also defined in terms of its singularity, its capacity to produce an effect, its power to act, which means its affects, which are nothing other than the decrease or increase of its power to act. Every nation, like every individual, can be defined by its constant relation of motion and rest between parts, as well as its capacity to affect and be affected. As with Simondon, individuation is both structural and dynamic, made up of relations and forces.

This political dimension of affects, as a problem of the relation of individuals to the collective, to the state, helps illustrate another point of difference and identity between Spinoza and Simondon, a difference and identity related to the difference and identity of the individual and the collective. The tension between the affective constitution of the individual and the state, the difficulty of getting people to love the same things or hate the same things, in unison, reveals something of the constitutive complexity of affects. This complexity makes it possible to see something like metastability in Spinoza's account. As we have noted, one of the central differences between Simondon and Spinoza is that the former argues that affects are metastable and pre-individual, becoming more individualised in emotions, in localised and discernible patterns of feelings. Such a distinction is absent from Spinoza. However, as we have already noted, Spinoza's affects are given twice, once in terms of their genesis in relations, and once in terms of their generic definitions. This dual account places every affect in tension between a generic definition, one is given for every possible affect, and a specific definition in which, as Spinoza writes, 'there are as many species of joy, sadness, and desire, and consequently of each affect composed of these (like vacillation of mind) or derived from them (like love, hate, hope, fear, etc.) as there are species of objects by which we are affected' (EIIIP56). This nominalism of affects on the side of the object is mirrored on the side of the subject, as 'each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other' (EIIIP57). It is this multiplicity of objects and desires that makes any political constitution of a shared affect a difficult, albeit necessary, project: any attempt to define national (as well as racial or class) belonging according to a shared love or hate, risks conflicting with the multiplicity of hatred and loves that define singular affective existence.

The complexity of Spinoza's affects is not just a pure numerical multiplicity, a love for every object and a desire for every individual, but it involves the fact

that the same object, the same person or thing, can become the cause of joy and sadness, love and hatred. It is this temporal fluctuation that leads to the vacillation of the affects, a tension between two different ways of feeling or relating to a thing that can be described as a kind of metastability, a tension between two different affects. Within this metastability there is a tendency, a striving, a *conatus*, to think and act in relation to those things that affirm our existing and thinking. This striving cannot be separated from the counter-tendency, which is nothing less than the way of the world, the simple fact that all striving takes place in a world which overwhelms it. This striving can be considered one of individuation, a tendency to affirm the things that cause joy, that increase the power of action (EIIIP54). Even left to its own devices this tendency is not linear, at least unproblematically; this is in part because what we imagine to be the cause of joy may, in the long run, be a cause of sadness. The inadequate and adequate ideas of things, or what Spinoza calls the false and true knowledge of good and evil, produce radically different strivings. These different strivings constitute different individuations. As Spinoza writes,

very often it happens that while we are enjoying a thing we wanted, the body acquires from this enjoyment a new constitution, by which it is differently determined, and other images of things are aroused in it; and at the same time the mind begins to image other things, and desire other things.

EIIIP59S

Spinoza offers a discontinuous account of individuation, in which the realisation or frustration of certain desires, loves and hatreds, leads to a transformation of desire itself, to a fundamental reorientation of the *conatus*. This discontinuity reaches its conceptual zenith in Spinoza's description of the Spanish poet, 'who was seized with sickness, and although he recovered, he remained so unconscious of his past life that he did not believe that the stories and tragedies he had written were his own' (EIVP39S). If this story seems miraculous, even a fiction, then Spinoza reminds us that a similar radical transformation happens to everyone, in the passage from infant to adult, a passage that entails an entire transformation of an affective constitution as much as morphology of knowledge. Simondon also argues that individuation, at least the individuation that defines the psychic individuation that defines personality, or personalisation, is discontinuous. As Simondon argues, it is through successive crises that personality is constituted, crises that are always crises of the relation between the individual and its pre-individual constitution, its affective constitution and

basic sensibility.⁸¹ As much as individualisation is the process by which affects and senses are individuated into emotions and perceptions, this gradual individuation is punctuated with crises, moments when a given individuation does not function and is necessarily transformed. Individuation is a solution, a particular way of resolving a tension between different affects, perceptions, and concepts, but what works for one problem does not work for others; it is a solution that is constantly being put into question.

As we have seen, Hegel's philosophy, at least that of the *Phenomenology* and the section of the *Philosophy of Right* dedicated to Ethical Life, can be described as one of successive individuations coming into crisis and transformation. The affective sensibility constituted in the family comes into crisis and is expelled into civil society, and the self-interested subjectivity of civil society comes into conflict with the unintended effects of its actions, effects that can only be overcome by identifying with the universal perspective of the state. Of course, such a reading presupposes that we foreground the linear, almost biographical, dimension of the passage through ethical life at the expense of its structural dimensions, stressing the passage through family, civil society, and the state, rather than their structural tensions. Despite the slant of such a reading, it is fair to describe much of Hegel's philosophy as one of the progressive constitution and destruction of different transindividual individualities, a progression that often passes through crises, even if they are not all struggles to the death. What is given as one rare instance in Spinoza, the case of the 'Spanish Poet', is more or less the rule in Hegel; determination is negation and new individualities, new figures of subjectivity, are not constituted without the destruction of the old. Simondon, however, is even less interested in what parallels might exist between his thought and Hegel. There are few references to Hegel by name in his writing. He does not even merit an entire section in Simondon's draft of *Histoire de la notion d'individu*, and is only mentioned as part of a general trend in the nineteenth century to subordinate the individual to a larger process, whether that process is conceived as temporal, in the case of Hegel's philosophy of history, or spatial, in the case of early sociology.⁸² In that text, Hegel is viewed as a general trend of the nineteenth century, a trend away from the foundational notion of the individual towards society.

Simondon has more to say about the 'dialectic' in general. For Simondon, the dialectic is to some extent a failed attempt to think of the transindividual. The dialectic fails because it continues to think of the relation of individual

81 Simondon 2005, p. 268.

82 Simondon 2005, p. 486.

to society, to the collective, as largely a relation of interior to exterior.⁸³ It is a dialectic in which the interior is constantly being exteriorised, the labour of the slave forms and makes the world, and the exterior is constantly being interiorised, to take a work example again, the discipline and technology of the tool shapes the individual's actions and habits. For Simondon, the transindividual is neither exterior, existing as something outside of the individual, nor interior, even if it is characterised by intimacy – an intimacy that is expressed in terms of spirit or religion. The dialectic, with its passage from interior to exterior, and vice versa, does little to resolve this problem. This is the second critique Simondon makes of dialectics. Simondon argues that with the dialectic 'being has need of becoming, but becoming is still at least partially conceived as exterior to being'; in other words, there are still essences, essences that are partly independent of becoming.⁸⁴ This is radically distinct from the conception of individuation, in which the phases of pre-individual being and their individuations are just as much a part of being as the specific individuations. As Simondon writes, illustrating this difference of orientation, 'Becoming is not the becoming of an individuated being but the becoming individuated of being'.⁸⁵

It is from this perspective that we can address what is perhaps Simondon's most salient critique of Hegel with respect to this project, or at least the reception of Hegel as a thinker of social relations. Simondon argues that intersubjectivity masks and conceals transindividuality, a point that echoes his general point regarding the critique of the priority of individuated beings over the process of individuation. This makes it possible to revisit a tension that we have already grasped in Hegel's thought, a tension between a dialectic of intersubjectivity, dominated by the recognition of one individual by another individual, and what could be called a dialectic of transindividuality, or at least a more transindividual conception of the constitution of subjectivity. The tension and division between these two concepts can be illustrated by the oft-cited dialectic of master and slave. As we have argued in the last chapter, the 'master/slave' dialectic splits into two. The first, most readily recognised, dialectic is that of recognition itself, in which the struggle is a struggle to be recognised by the other, to be seen as a person and not just a living thing. However, as I noted in Chapter 1, Hegel's solution to this particular struggle is to argue that the slave can achieve a kind of recognition, a kind of awareness, through the activity of

83 Simondon 2005, p. 281.

84 Simondon 2005, p. 323.

85 Simondon 2005, p. 322.

work. Through work, Hegel asserts a kind of transindividuality that is irreducible to recognition, a point that is further developed in the *Philosophy of Right*.

While it might be possible to argue that the Hegelian dialectic is hopelessly geared towards intersubjectivity – at least this is how it appears in the various philosophies of recognition – it is perhaps best to repeat the gesture we made with Simondon's critique of Spinoza. As we saw, pantheism, the dissolution of all individuality into the all-encompassing individual of nature or God, is less a reading of Spinoza than a persistent danger within any thought that problematises the individual. It is often remarked that critiques of the individual or, in more contemporary terminology, 'the subject', often end up displacing the subject only in order to make society the functional totality, the individual. Similarly, intersubjectivity, the reduction of transindividuality to the relation between individuals, is also a persistent problem in any thought that attempts to think the constitutive nature of relations. The question is not one of a correct or incorrect reading of Spinoza or Hegel, but rather of the difficulty of thinking outside of the figure or concept of the individual. The primacy of the individual is asserted either in terms of nature (or society), which reasserts itself as an individual, a totality, as the individual person is displaced; or, conversely, in positing relations as nothing other than the relations between individuals.

What then of Simondon's relation to Marx? What specific dangers or limitations does it expose? As we have seen, Simondon's first point of philosophical disagreement with Marx had to do with alienation, with an expansion of alienation beyond a putative restricted economic content: alienation is not just the loss of property, but the rupture that exists between the genesis of technology, its condition of emergence, and its utilisation.⁸⁶ Simondon's interest in broadening the concept of alienation beyond its supposed economic definition is reflected in his later critique of Marx. For Simondon, psychic and collective individuation, the transindividual, has as its basis biological individuation, the individuation that constitutes the basis of the human organism. However, the relation between the biological individual and the later psychic and collective individuations is not linear or deterministic: biological individuation produces a set of capacities, capabilities to be affected and capacities to sense, which must be individuated. Our biological inheritance is less a specific nature than metastable tensions and conflicts between possibilities. Simondon understands Marx to be working through a similar anthropological problematic. There is first the relation with nature, as Marx (and Engels) wrote: 'The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human

86 Simondon 1958, p. 250.

individuals'.⁸⁷ The priority that Marx places on production as the production and reproduction of life means that there is first an individuation that passes through the biological necessity of labour, and its social organisation.⁸⁸ This individuation would itself be incomplete, and would require a second properly human individuation, that of culture. This is Simondon's interpretation of base and superstructure, understood as two successive individuations, the first biological, the second cultural.⁸⁹ Simondon contests this on two counts. First, that there might not be other structures, other relations, not determined by humankind's metabolic relation with nature that might determine individuations. Second, that underneath these biological relations, biological social relations, and inter-individual relations, there are transindividual relations, relations not determined by biological necessity or mediated by the labour relation.⁹⁰ Simondon reads economic determination as a kind of socialised biological determinism, a relation of need, and thus insists on its inadequacy. Base cannot be understood to determine the superstructure; economic individuation does not determine psychic individuation. Base is always something more than a metabolic relation and culture cannot be reduced to superstructure.

It would be redundant here to argue that Simondon's reading does not exhaust all of Marx's thought, just as it does not exhaust Spinoza or Hegel, something that should be clear after the transindividual interpretation of Marx (as well as Spinoza and Hegel) offered in the previous chapter. Of particular note is Simondon's reduction of the mode of production to a particular manner of producing, to an anthropological or naturalistic concept. Such a reading overlooks the fact that the mode of production is less a manner of responding to biological needs than it is its own structuring relation or series of relations.⁹¹ Simondon's own reading suggests that he was aware of a different conception of the mode of production understood less as a natural basis for superstructural individuation than as a historical structure with its own specific logic and history. In Simondon's draft on the history of individuation, he remarks that the nineteenth century, with the rise of sociology and historicism, marks a new period in the reflection of the individual, one in which the individual is

87 Marx and Engels 1970, p. 149.

88 Simondon 2005, p. 301.

89 Simondon 2005, p. 302.

90 Ibid.

91 Althusser has argued that one of the central ideological functions of classical political economy is the manner in which it equivocates between biological need and the needs of the economic system (Althusser 1970b, p. 179).

seen as part of a larger something, society or history. This period is generally split between society, viewed as an order of simultaneity, of intersecting roles and inter-individual relations, or history, viewed as an order of succession. Individuation is relativised spatially or temporally, is situated in terms of other relations in the social structure or the historicity of its formations. Marx's thought, specifically his conception of class, is framed at the intersection of these two tendencies: classes are determined by both the order of simultaneity, the technological relations and conflicts at a given historical moment, and the order of succession, the history that defines both the technology and specific modality of conflict.⁹² From this reading, the mode of production is less a structure determined by natural need than something defined and determined by the history and intersection of social relations.

Simondon's second critique is predicated not so much on its supposed naturalistic basis, but rather is a critique of society understood as a distribution of social roles. Although the two critiques are not radically distinct, what unifies biology and society, or a certain conception of society, is the functional basis of individuation. The critique of this basis is thus central to both elaborating the nature of the transindividual, differentiating from a more conventional notion of society, and elaborating the point of contact between Simondon and Marxist thought. As we have already seen, Simondon argues that both psychology and sociology are ill-equipped to grasp the reality of the transindividual, which continually passes through the psychic and the social. For Simondon, sociology can be identified with the 'inter-individual', with the tendency to grasp social relations according to the functional integration of tasks and duties. Simondon often frames this idea of the inter-individual through the idea of work, which relates already constituted individuals through their specific individuations, individuations of skills, tasks, and functions.⁹³ Simondon's point here is twofold. First, it allows him to differentiate a natural sociality, a sociality at the level of biological individuation, the individuation of the living being according to its perceptions and instincts from other dimensions of society. This sociality is thus similar to that which is found in various forms of social or gregarious animals, such as ants.⁹⁴ The natural sociality is not set apart from the human, as Aristotle differentiates the gregarious animals from the political animal that is man, but is internal to it. There is a natural sociality to human social relations, just as there is a biological individuation to human psychic and collective

⁹² Simondon 2005, p. 486.

⁹³ Simondon 2005, p. 302.

⁹⁴ Combes 2013, p. 44.

individuation. 'Natural' is not meant in a normative sense, but in a descriptive one. Simondon also refers to this sociality as 'objective', stressing that 'subjective' sociality necessarily follows it, as psychic (and collective) individuation follows biological individuation. The sociality of work closely follows this natural difference. Human sociality cannot be reduced to this individuation, and must stem from its unresolved tensions and problems. A society is always more than a relationship of natural dependence, just as subjectivity is always more than a system of needs.⁹⁵ As long as one focuses on the social relations of functions and tasks, relations that pass through already constituted individuals, one will miss the transindividual. Transindividuality is not a relation that passes through already constituted individuals, as is the case with intersubjective recognition, but passes through the pre-individual aspects of individuality, affects and perceptions. Thus, Simondon's concept of transindividuality is as much a critique of a kind of vulgar sociology, which sees social relations everywhere, as it is of a vulgar psychologism, which only sees the individual and its intentions.

Simondon's critique is not just a critique of sociology and psychology as two different ways of grasping the individual and society, forever blind to their constitutive intersection, but of the way in which the transindividual passes beneath the perception of individuation. When Simondon argues that inter-individuality obscures and conceals the transindividual, he is reflecting not just on the constitutive limits of psychology and sociology, but also on the way in which social relations obscure the transindividual. As long as we envision something called 'society' made up of 'individuals', we will overlook the transindividual. This is why Combes insists on perceiving the transindividual through what she calls 'the intimacy of the common'. The affective dimension of both individuation and collectivity means that transindividuality is not necessarily found in some area that we would designate as 'the social', but encompasses the most intimate space of feelings and perceptions. As Combes writes, 'intimacy arises less from a private sphere than from an impersonal affective life, which is held immediately in common'.⁹⁶ The common is present in the very constitution of intimate life, and vice versa.

Both of these points, labour relations as a natural sociality and the inter-individual as that which obscures the transindividual, are markers of Simondon's distance from Marxism, or at least of how he understood this difference. What Combes suggests, however, or makes possible to suggest, is that Simon-

95 Simondon 2005, p. 278.

96 Combes 2013, p. 51.

don's distinction between the inter-individual and the transindividual makes possible a thought of a kind of sociality irreducible to a given society, a common without community. As Combes frames this distinction,

Still, for the subject to become engaged in the constitution of the collective, first of all, means stripping away community, or at the very least, setting aside those aspects of community that prevent the perception of the existence of preindividual, and thus the encounter with transindividual: identities, functions, the entire network of human 'commerce' ... which assigns each person to their place within social space.⁹⁷

This distinction is not without its precedence in Marxist thought. In *The German Ideology*, Marx makes a distinction between the state and society. As we have seen, in that text Marx argues that the state is an 'illusory communal life' that is based upon real ties of flesh and blood, and language, what we could call the 'preindividual conditions of social existence'.⁹⁸ As much as the state is based upon these conditions, grounding itself on a shared language and social connections, it can only be an illusion because of the divisions, most importantly the division of labour that underlies capitalist society, divisions that reduce individuals to their functional place within the exploitation process. Marx's central point stresses the illusory dimension of the state, its status as a false community through which a particular class enforces its hegemony. It is not, however, too distant from Simondon's point in that the state is always a reification of the basis for social existence. This idea of a reified sociality also underlies Althusser's conception of a 'society effect', which Althusser describes as the manner 'in which men consciously or unconsciously live their lives, their projects, their actions, their attitudes and their functions as *social*'.⁹⁹ These disparate threads, Simondon's critique of the inter-individual as concealing transindividuality, Marx's idea of 'illusory communal life', and Althusser's society effect culminate in Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that every social formation engenders a 'socius', a representation of social existence that appears not to be an effect of social relations but their cause. This representation of society inverts the relationship between effect and cause; it is an effect of social relations but it appears as their necessary condition. What this disconnected thread perhaps expresses is the idea of a gap between this or that existing

97 Combes 2013, p. 38.

98 Marx 1970, p. 53.

99 Althusser 1970b, p. 66.

society, with its functions and illusory communal life, and the metastable and changing transindividual relations. Far from being burdened by a commitment to 'community' or the social understood as a functional totality of labour, Marxist thought has attempted to distinguish between an existing social formation, with its corresponding reification of sociality, and the very capacity to produce and transform social relations.

This distinction can be seen with respect to the concept of labour, the centre of Simondon's critique of Marx. For Simondon, it is the centrality of labour in Marx's thought that makes it both a naturalism, predicated on natural need, and a functionalism that understands social relations as relations through constituted, and functional, individuals. Moishe Postone broadly distinguishes between two different critical strategies in Marxism: one that makes labour the object of its criticism, and a second in which labour is the subject of its criticism.¹⁰⁰ To make labour an object of critique is to criticise the reduction of all human activities to labour. It is to criticise the instrumentality and teleology implicit in the idea of labour. Such a criticism is situated against the idea that human beings are primarily 'homo laborans', and seeks to uncover the historical, political, and cultural transformations that have reduced human beings to 'organs' of labour. While a critique articulated from the standpoint of labour takes labour for granted as a fundamental element of existence, making it the basis of an ontology or anthropology, and from this criticises the relations of distribution that exploit labour, alienating it from its own activity. Labour is assumed to be productive, and creative of value, and the critical question is how this power is turned against it. These two critiques are assumed to be fundamentally opposed. A heterodox tradition, starting from Italian Operaismo, and continuing through *Autonomia* and other strands, has insisted on taking labour as both the object and subject of critique. As Mario Tronti argues, the 'working class' must struggle against itself, against its constitution as abstract labour power as much as it must struggle against capitalism, against the exploitation of labour power.¹⁰¹

One name for this conception of labour as simultaneously subject and object of critique, at least as it has been developed in the work of Antonio Negri, is 'living labour'. The term 'living labour' has a primarily rhetorical function in Marx, juxtaposing the life of labour against the dead weight of capital, separating living labour from capital's vampire power, but, as Negri argues, this rhetoric of life against death also touches on its conceptual determination.

100 Postone 1996, p. 16.

101 Tronti 2012, p. 5.

Living labour is defined primarily as activity, first and foremost it is this active, subjective dimension that sets it apart from the dead labour of capital, as well as everything it produces. It might be useful to consider living labour as transversal to the more well-known definitions of abstract and concrete labour, whereas the former stresses the abstract and social dimension of labour and the latter stresses its concrete dimension, living labour stresses its relational and antagonistic dimension. As Negri writes,

One must look carefully at this nucleus of living labour, this creative tension that is at the same time political and economic, productive of civil, social, and political structures – in a word, constituent. Cooperative living labour produces a social ontology that is constitutive and innovative, a weaving of forms that touch the economic and the political; living labor produces an indistinct mixture of the political and economic that has a creative figure.¹⁰²

Living labour is transindividual, not just in the immediate sense that for Marx all labour is transindividual, encompassing skills, habits, and relations that exceed the individual, but also in the more precise sense that it exceeds the intersubjective functionality of work.¹⁰³ It is always collective, producing social life, but cannot be separated from the singularity of a living body. Living labour is not the work that defines one's place in society understood as the sum total of intersubjective relations. It passes beneath intersubjective recognition, constituting the basis for the activity that makes, contests, and remakes structures and institutions. Thus, as with Simondon's critique of determinism and society, the critique of work, of a sociology of work, may break with a certain dominant image of Marx, one grounded on economism, determinism, and the valorisation of work, but in doing so it only brings Simondon's thought closer to other aspects of elements of Marxist thought. Transindividuality makes it possible to conceptualise or at least name a particular paradox that we grasped in the last chapter: Marx must criticise capitalist society's tendency towards isolation and individuation while simultaneously recognising that the collectivity put to work by capital, that of the combined species-being of humanity, is always already structured by capitalist functionality. Transindividuality makes it possible to posit a commonality that is irreducible to this functionality.

¹⁰² Negri 1999, p. 33.

¹⁰³ Aspe 2013, p. 349.

As with Simondon's critique of Spinoza and Hegel, the task here is not to pass final judgement on the correct or incorrect nature of this assessment, but to use Simondon's critique to underscore one of the fundamental problems of articulating the concept of transindividuality. If the fundamental problem that Spinoza indicated was that of the annulment of the individual into some larger individual, the pantheistic god or nature, and that of Hegel was the reduction of the transindividual to intersubjectivity, to the relations of recognition, what then is the fundamental problem that can be indicated through this reading of Marx? At first glance it would seem to be similar to Hegel, as with Hegel the problem is the reduction of the transindividual to the intersubjective, to the relation between already constituted individuals, only now these individuals are defined by their place in the productive relations, by labour. However, it could also be said that Simondon's critique of Marx is that of a deterministic account of the transindividual, grounding the transindividual on the economic base, a base that would explain and define the later individuations. Thus, to complete our list of fundamental problems of the transindividual, we could say that its three great risks are: totality, or the reduction of the individual to a larger individual; intersubjectivity, or the reduction of the transindividual relation to the relation between individuals; and determinism, or positing transindividuality as simply an effect of some other structure. Structure in the singular is important in this context. What Simondon criticises is the linear causality of economic function as the only basis of individuation.

Taken together, these three critical interventions define a kind of negative space from which emerge the contours of a transindividual account of subjectivity and social relations. Against totality, or the critique of the individual in terms of some larger individual within which it would be subsumed, nature or society, there is an insistence on the necessary 'trans' dimension of individuality. Against the reduction of the relation between individuals to intersubjectivity, there is the insistence on the 'trans' as necessarily passing beneath and above subjectivity, as the intersection of the pre-individual and transindividual. Against the insistence of the linear determinism of individuation, there is the insistence of the necessarily metastable relations of intersecting individuations.

Individuation and Philosophy

As much as Simondon's readings, or even misreadings, of the different philosophers underscore some of the philosophical and conceptual novelty of his particular ontology, or ontogenesis, of individuation, the question remains as

to how Simondon's conceptual individuation fares with respect to the specific fields of politics and political economy. We have seen that even in the case of Spinoza, the thinker closest to Simondon in developing an ontology of individuation, politics, the politics of the gap between collective and individual affects, produces a very different interpretation of Spinoza's relation to transindividuality. Viewed in terms of the *Ethics* alone, it is possible to read Spinoza as the writer of nature as an individual, but a reading of the politics of the individual and collective conatus complicates such an identification. Without addressing all of Simondon's interpretations of Hegel and Marx, we can also pose the question as to the relation of transindividuation not only to politics, but also to the critique of political economy. How does Simondon's provocation to think transindividuality without reducing it to totality, intersubjectivity, or determination relate to the conflicting individuations of politics and political economy?

Simondon argues that individuation cannot be known, cannot be grasped, because knowledge is an individuation; it is an individuation both of what is known, as concepts are formed from perceptions and affects, and who is doing the knowing, as conceiving of a thing, shaping a concept, forms a new way of thinking.¹⁰⁴ This is a consequence of the idea that thinking itself is a process of individuation, that individuation must be enacted rather than conceptualised. This statement poses an interesting problem for reading Simondon, a problem that is also an opening. As Stiegler argues, if individuation cannot be known, if we are always already on this side of it, on the side of individuation, then it can only be enacted.¹⁰⁵ Individuation is an activity, an action and practice, and not an act of contemplation. It could be argued, and has to some extent with respect to Toscano's remarks situating Virno, Combes, and Deleuze (to which we added Stiegler), that every reading of Simondon is an individuation of a set of problems and tensions that exist in a kind of metastable state. Moreover, as we have argued in the previous chapter, transindividuality and its related concepts and problems can also have transformative effects on other philosophers, making possible new readings freed from the oppositions or problems of the individual and society. Thus, it is possible to argue that this practice of individuation and transformation is transductive, Simondon's texts and problems are individuated at the same time as they make possible new readings of other texts, new individuations. The two individuations, of Simondon and of the historical tradition, reinforce and transform each other.

104 Simondon 2005, p. 26.

105 Stiegler 2009, p. 6.

The practice by which a philosophy is read and interpreted in multiple ways – while simultaneously making possible new interpretations of other philosophers – is not necessarily limited to Simondon; any reading of any philosopher that is anything other than a paraphrase is necessarily a transformation, and a new individuation, the production not of new concepts but of new senses for existing concepts. Simondon's statement only underscores the fact that in this case this transformation is explicitly thematised, and that Simondon's particular conceptual vocabulary has invited this kind of open relationship. To argue that a concept is its individuation, that every reading, every interpretation is this process, does not simply mean that everything, every reading, is possible. Transindividuation is not just a new word for old notions of collective or spirit, just as metastable is not a new word for old notions of complexity or flux, as much as it might be read that way. On the contrary, Simondon's central provocation forces any attentive reading of his concepts and their related problems to dispense with such easy and unexamined notions as the individual and society; a difficult task, but one that will ideally lead to a rigorous thought of relations and their materiality.

What is the basis for this rigour? One could conclude, following the central idea of individuation as process, that every reading is itself framed by the process of individuation, that a reader of Spinoza reads Simondon differently than a reader of Hegel and so on, just as a soldier and a farmer read hoof prints in the mud differently, one thinking of war, the other of planting. In this sense, it is individuation all the way down. Such an interpretation risks becoming nothing more than a theoretically sophisticated perspectivism, in which everything is permitted because everyone has been individuated differently. Moreover, it overlooks precisely what is at stake here, psychic and collective individuation. Taking the transindividual seriously necessitates a collective dimension to even the most idiosyncratic reading. Which is to say that if transindividuation has to be understood as a practice, it is a practice grounded not just on speculation, of the vicissitudes of one's individual biography understood as bibliography, but on the historical conjuncture.¹⁰⁶ We have already seen how the critical dimension of transindividuality, transindividuation as a critical perspective on individuation, shifts from Spinoza, to Hegel, to Marx, a shift that reflects their historical moment. Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx's critique shifted with the political and economic transformation of their society, transformations which are more than simply shifts of the context of a philosophical perspective, but transformations of the very basis of individuation.

106 Citton 2010a, p. 119.

In the next chapter we will turn to a Simondonian critique of political economy, or a post-Simondonian reflection on political economy. Bernard Stiegler and Paolo Virno have each developed a reading of transindividuality to criticise political economy, a reading that is not grounded on an economy understood as the metabolic base of all subsequent individuations, but instead sees the economy, the relations of production and consumption, as a fundamental transformation of the very problem of transindividuation. Transformations of the economy at both the level of production and consumption transform the basis of the habits, perceptions, and affects that constitute transindividuality. This shift will be both a displacement, a shift of an ontology onto the terrain of social reality, and a reorientation to the current conjuncture.

Affective Composition: Toward a Spinozist Critique of Political Economy

The terrain of affects, or the emotions, do not just mark a point where Spinoza and Simondon's concepts of individuation intersect, but are also a privileged point of entry for articulating the ontological and political dimension of trans-individuality. By examining the affects, it is possible to map out what is at stake in viewing social relations from the perspective of the transindividual. Or more to the point, one sense of what is at stake with respect to transindividuality, since as Simondon argued in the previous chapter, there are multiple transindividual relations, stemming from productive relations, knowledge production, and affective sensibilities. Neither affects, the imagination, nor knowledge are sufficient causal conditions for a transindividual account of subjectivity, but they are each transindividual. Bringing Simondon and Spinoza together with respect to the affects also makes it possible to draw together two distinct accounts of transindividuality as they converge towards a common object, the critique of the contemporary structure of capitalism, something which will be examined more thoroughly in the next chapter.

While affects might at first appear to be highly individuated, even personal and idiosyncratic, a more sustained examination clarifies that they are a terrain of individuation. Affects are not only profoundly individual, but individuating, as each individual can be defined by their particular love, hates, and desires. Affects are both causes and effects of individuation, constitutive of and constituted by the process of individuation. As such every affect is simultaneously collective and individual, not just because the general affective comportments – love, hatred, hope, and fear – constitute a shared set of orientations, but that the objects of these affects do not exist as isolated objects but only in and through their constitutive relations. Affects or emotions are also collective not just in that they refer to shared terminology and experience, but also insofar as their objects are collective as well. Objects of love and hate define communities as much as individuals.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the similarity between Simondon and Spinoza in terms of affective individuation is undercut by a terminological difference. In Simondon, emotions are individuations of an affective milieu; they are part of the process of individuation, a process that exists in tension with the individuation of sensations into perceptions. In contrast to this, Spinoza uses

the term affect (*affectus*) consistently, as affects define both the generic capacities and their specific individuations. Spinoza's consistent use of the term, his lack of a distinction between emotions and affect, is part of a general consistency, an immanent ontology, which makes human relations a part of the immanent relations of nature. For Spinoza, the term 'affect' and the understanding of individuals as a capacity to affect and be affected refer not just to human or animal emotional life, but also to the entirety of finite existence, the entire world of modes. As much as affects individuate both collectives and individuals, defining their particular conatus, the general capacity to affect or be affected is common to every finite thing. It is yet another example of Spinoza's critique of the fundamental humanism that sees man as a 'kingdom within a kingdom', that is, defined by fundamentally different relations and rules than the rest of nature. Simondon's terminological division between pre-individual affects and individuated emotions has been utilised and developed by writers who have explicitly developed the idea of affect as something that is at once less individuated than emotion, on the order of the pre-individual, and more subject to historical and political organisation, more on the order of the transindividual. This distinction has been given its clearest articulation in Brian Massumi's work. As Massumi writes,

An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience, which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional consensual point of insertion into intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is owned and recognized. It is crucial to theorize the difference between affect and emotion.¹

Massumi's reading, which has its antecedents in Simondon and Deleuze, has become influential in contemporary theorisations of affect, which take as their starting point the difference between transindividual affect and the individuation of emotion.²

Despite the terminological difference of affect and emotion, Spinoza and Simondon can both be read as positing affect as that which passes between the pre-individual and the transindividual. For Simondon, this is because affects are more metastable and thus are the part of the subject that is not individu-

1 Massumi 2002, p. 28.

2 Gregg and Seigworth 2010, p. 5.

ated. The affective dimension carries over from the pre-individual, constituting a kind of indetermination at the heart of individuation, an indetermination that demands a social dimension in order to be at least partially resolved. In a similar fashion, Spinoza's affects are pre-individual; they are less determinate states of individuals and properties of objects than passages and transformations, increases and decreases of power. Joy is nothing other than a passage from a lesser to a greater perfection and sadness is only the opposite. They are intensities, transformations of states, rather than determinate conditions. Their objects change over time, becoming the source of pain and joy, love and hate, thus affects necessarily vacillate. As much as the affects are not so much states as they are an index of their transformation, constituting a process of the constitution and destruction of individuation, they are necessarily transindividual. Or more to the point, because the affects are always situated in the increases and decreases of power, they are necessarily transindividual. For Simondon, the progression of individuation that takes place between affects and emotions necessarily passes through the transindividual as affects coalesce around perceptual points of view and relations.³ Affects and emotions are the transindividual intersection between individual and collective individuation.

The difference of terminology between affect and emotion risks obscuring other, more salient, differences between Simondon and Spinoza. Spinoza's relational account of the various affects is oriented around a fundamental distinction, the fundamental axiological distinction of an increase or decrease in power.⁴ It is this distinction that initially distinguishes joy and sadness, and is carried over into the various permutations of love and hate. This is not to suggest that this duality constitutes some kind of core that all of the affects could be reduced to, so all that matters is joy or sadness, increases or decreases in power. There is a constitutive tension between the basic orientation of joy and sadness and the constitutive complexity of the myriad ways in which sadness and joy are combined and articulated. Second, this duality of joy and sadness is divided again in the split between the joyful passive affects and the sad passive affects, between those affects which are joyful, reflecting an increase of power, but which have an external cause, and those which have their own internal determination.⁵ This complicates the initial axiology of joy and sadness, introducing the idea that there is a negative dimension to passive

3 Simondon 2005, p. 261.

4 Sharp 2011, p. 40.

5 Bove 1996, p. 130.

joys, a possibility that they can be excessive, and a positive dimension, or at the very least a utility, to such passive sad affects as fear and humility.

As I argued in Chapter 1, Spinoza's account of the affects is developed in terms of both their generic definitions and their specific articulation. They are initially defined according to their basic and fundamental orientation, as combinations of joy and sadness and desire, but this orientation gives way to a multiplicity of interacting affects as objects multiply and relations become more complex.⁶ The final propositions of Part Three of Spinoza's *Ethics* would seem to suggest a nominalist plurality of affects, in which there are as many loves and hates 'as there are species of objects by which we are affected' (EIIIIP56), and 'each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of one from the essence of the other' (EIIIIP57). This plurality is grounded in Spinoza's fundamental assertion that if desire constitutes the essence of man, then this essence is radically singular, defined by the specific affects and history of a given individual.⁷ Two things keep this articulation from disappearing into a pure nominalism of different objects and essences. First, there is the fundamental axis of joy and sadness, activity and passivity, which define the contours of each individual striving. Second, there is the necessarily transindividual basis of these objects and desires. As Spinoza argues, the presence of others, of the affects of others, is constitutive of the very nature of these affects. That others love something, or hate what we love, is not some secondary dimension added to an original singular, or individual, assessment, but constitutes the very basis of the affective relations, determining their intensity and vacillations. As Spinoza writes, citing Ovid, 'He has a heart of steel, who loves what another man leaves alone' (EIIIIP31C). The centrifugal force of the conatus, its tendency to define its own joys and sadness based on the history of its encounters, is countered by the centripetal force of social structures and norms.

The deceptively simple definitions of the affects, the combination of increases and decreases in power, which is expanded into an articulation of singular desires, singular essences, and transindividual relations, mirrors the articulation of religion in the Appendix of the *Ethics* and Spinoza's political works. As we have seen with respect to religion, a general condition, namely that of being 'conscious of appetite' and 'ignorant of causes', that defines prejudice becomes the basis of specific superstitions. The various religions can be understood as different articulations of this fundamental condition. Spinoza's

6 Morfino 2014, p. 66.

7 Balibar 1997, p. 8.

philosophy or critique of religion is developed twice. Once in the *Ethics* according to its general conditions, the affects of hope and fear that compel each individual to seek security and signs in nature, and once in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, in which the specific signs of scripture are examined.⁸ Of course, there is overlap between these two analyses, the preface of the *Treatise* restates much of the argument of the Appendix to the *Ethics*, and the latter also has a few references to the specific nature of Christianity, primarily in terms of the focus on humility as the specific example of a passive sad affect with a useful social function. The division of texts is less a matter of a rigorous separation of ontology and politics than it is the precondition for an understanding of the imagination and the affects in terms of their fundamental composition. In each case there is a general definition of the constitutive relations that are articulated in a specific case, in the specific articulation of the affects and imagination that defines a specific case.⁹

Composition is intended here as a direct reference to the Italian autonomist tradition.¹⁰ In that tradition, class composition referred to the components of the labour process from the degree of co-operation and technological development involved, its degree of exploitation, the division between surplus value and necessary labour, and the extent of political organisation and contestation.¹¹ However, two recent developments have brought composition in this sense closer to an examination of the transindividual affects. First, and most obviously, there is the work of Antonio Negri on Spinoza. Negri's writing on Spinoza is perhaps more generally understood to be an examination of what has become known as one of the other central theses of Italian Marxism, 'the autonomist thesis'. This thesis, which argued that working-class resistance precedes and prefigures capitalist domination, is transformed into an ontological postulate in Negri's reading of Spinoza. As Negri argues, Spinoza's philosophy is one in which every figuration of power understood as transcendence or *potestas*, specifically the power of God understood as ruler, must be understood as an expression or articulation of power understood as *potentia*, the immanent power of striving.¹² Spinoza's destruction of any transcendence, any order of power (*potestas*) that would stand apart from and over that which governs is added to Marx's fundamental assertion that labour produces capital. The result of this reading of Marx with Spinoza is that production, the forces of

8 Laux 1993, p. 124.

9 Althusser 1997, p. 10.

10 Berardi 2009, p. 44.

11 Negri 2005, p. 95.

12 Negri 1997, p. 202.

production, is expanded beyond labour power to encompass the productive nature of the affects and imagination. As Negri writes, framing Spinoza's transformation through the familiar Marxist terminology, 'the forces of production produce the relations of production'.¹³ The relations of production, the legal and political structures of society, are nothing other than the organisation of conatus, productions of desire. Negri's emphasis is on a reading of Spinoza that stresses the constitutive dimension, its capacity to create, and thus undermine, the various institutional representations of power. However, as Orlean and Lordon argue, it is precisely because the conatus constructs these representations, creates the images of power, that constitute religion and the state, that mean that its composition cannot be considered as a pure expression of its power. The imaginary constitution cannot be separated from its misrecognition, the inadequate grasp of its own power. As we saw in Chapter 1, Lordon and Orlean's concept of 'immanent transcendence' is meant as a rejoinder to Negri's concept of immanent organisation. The relations of production constitute the forces of production, but never under conditions of their choosing. Negri's engagement with Spinoza expands the terrain of composition; it is no longer value that is constituted by labour power, but sociality as such that is constituted by the imagination and affects. In contemporary capitalism, striving produces social relations. Negri's turn towards Spinoza, expanding composition to encompass the imaginative and affective composition of the social structure, is further reinforced by the works of such writers in the autonomist tradition as Franco Berardi, Paolo Virno, Stevphen Shukaitis, and Maurizio Lazzarato, all of whom consider composition to encompass the affects and imagination. Affects are not simply an effect of other institutions and structures, but are directly produced through the labour of care, desire, etc., and are directly productive, constituting subjectivity and social relations. While part of the argument behind the contemporary turn to affects is historical, affects have become increasingly central in contemporary production and consumption; an affective dimension is integral to every mode of production.

My interest here is less about the broader contours of the turn towards affects in post-autonomist thought, transformations situated in the transformation of capital that will become the focus of the next chapter, and more about developing an understanding of affects as central to transindividuality. In order to do this, we can abstract two fundamental components from the broader trend of compositionism. First, and most generally, is the idea of composi-

13 Negri 2013, p. 40.

tionism itself, understood as a necessarily relational account in which affective, imaginative, conceptual, technical, and social dimensions must necessarily be thought in terms of not only their specific relations, but also their overdetermined intersections.¹⁴ Second, following the political articulation of the 'autonomist hypothesis', these compositions must be thought from their constitutive asymmetry, an asymmetry in which the dynamic component, living labour in Marx, or *conatus* (or *potentia*) in Spinoza, must be considered to be constitutive of the various representations and structures that appear to be its preconditions or opposed to it. The social institutions, state or capital, are nothing other than striving, an individuating of the subjects that constitute them, transindividuations. As Negri writes, 'In other words, in the post-industrial age the Spinozian critique of representation of capitalist power corresponds more to the truth than does the analysis of political economy'.¹⁵ This second dimension is as much an ontological commitment, a commitment to immanence, as it is a political commitment to some kind of priority of resistance. As we saw in the first chapter, the primacy of the *conatus*, or striving, does not in itself determine a particular orientation; striving has no telos. The political fallout of this fundamental ontological principle is that there is no necessary orientation towards liberation, towards a *conatus* that breaks with the existing social formations.

The broader consideration of affects, examining their composition, makes it possible to extend Spinoza's understanding of transindividuality beyond the specific objects of its critique, the anthropocentric idea of the universe and the anthropomorphic God, which we examined in Chapter 1. Following the work of Matheron, Bove, Lordon, and Sévérac, we could argue that any understanding of affective composition must start from two fundamental axes. The first is situated in the relationship to the object of individual and collective desire, while the second is situated on the axis of hope and fear, on the temporal dimension of uncertainty. These two axes, oriented towards either objects or the future, would seem to omit the more immediate affective dimension of social relations, the loves and hates that are integral to their definition in Part Three of the *Ethics* and which form the basis of immediate ethical struggle. It is this immediate dimension, the increasing spirals of love and hate, that takes up the foreground of Spinoza's analysis of affective individuation in Parts Three and Four

14 The use of the term 'overdetermination' refers to Althusser, whose own work on structural causality can be understood as another attempt to ground a social theory on Spinoza's ontology. The emphasis is less on the *conatus*, the striving, and more on immanent causality, the mutually determining causal relations.

15 Negri 1997, p. 246.

of the *Ethics*, an analysis that is explicitly oriented towards an ethical dimension, towards an increase of joy and a decrease of sadness. I am placing this ethical dimension in the background here for two reasons. First, much of it was already discussed in terms of Spinoza's transindividual critique in Chapter 1. Second, the general account of social relations functions as a relatively unchanging dimension of transindividuation; every social form, every state, is founded on a combination of imagination and reason. My emphasis here is on the historical conditions, the social relations, which shape and transform this basic ethical problem. The two axes of objects and temporality constitute the general preconditions for a historicisation of the affective composition of different transindividual individuations, defined by different ways of articulating hope and fear, and different objects of desire. A complete compositional analysis would also have to include not only the affects, but also the imagination and common notions as constitutive conditions.

As we saw in Chapter 1, ambition, the desire that others should desire what I desire, is caught in a fundamentally ambivalent situation. The desire for anything, the love of anything, is initially reinforced by others' love for it, intensifying it. However, as Spinoza writes of those who desire that others love what they love, 'while they rejoice to sing the praises of the thing they love, they fear to be believed' (EIVP37S1). Ambition is a fundamentally ambivalent affect; it is both intensified and destroyed by the fundamental imitation of the affects. As with hope and fear, this basic affective structure can be transformed through the transformation of the different objects of love and fear. Spinoza primarily situates this shift in terms of the shift from the finite and unstable objects, such as wealth, honour, and love, to knowledge and the intellectual love of god. The latter is, of course, free of the ambivalence and uncertainty that defines (and plagues) the affective relation to other objects of desire; knowledge and the intellectual love of God are both constant and infinite. This trajectory follows the overall ethical orientation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, a direction intended to move from sadness and impotence to beatitude and power.

A compositional analysis is possible, however, focusing on the historical transformation of the objects of desire. The impetus for this historicisation is to be found in Spinoza's account of affects, which stresses the constitutive relations over the constituted terms, thus opening up the possibility of reworking its analysis in different affective terrains. The map of this difference can be found in the closing passages of Part Four where Spinoza makes a reference to money. Money is, of course, finite and inconstant, but the thing that makes it something of an exception within Spinoza's list of the unstable objects of desire is its capacity to function as the precondition of other objects. Money functions as an affective general equivalent, an object that functions as the necessary

precondition of any other object of desire. One can also add to this function Spinoza's fundamental point regarding desire, 'that we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it' (EIIIIP9S). Money becomes a good because of its relation with all of the other possible objects of desire. As money it becomes the means to realising all other possible goods, 'it occupies the mind of the multitude more than anything else' (EIVAPPXXVIII). The desire for money is a common affect, capable of unifying the multitude more than reason.¹⁶

Spinoza offers an affective genesis of money, but it remains only one desire object for him, one desired good among others. It is for this reason that Matheron situates Spinoza in a feudal affective economy in which admiration, esteem, and glory are just as powerful as the desire for money, if not more so.¹⁷ One can contrast Spinoza's understanding of money, which as much as it occupies the mind of the multitude is still situated alongside other desires, other loves such as glory, with Marx's treatment of money in an early text on 'The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society'. This text is also written in a register that is primarily affective and anthropological, situating money alongside the other things that human beings strive for. Marx's assertion in those collected manuscripts, namely that humankind's passions have an ontological rather than simply an anthropological significance, opens up suggestive parallels between the works of Marx and Spinoza.¹⁸ As Marx writes,

No doubt the demand also exists for him who has no money, but his demand is a mere thing of the imagination without effect or existence for me, for a third party, for the [others], and which therefore remains even for me unreal *and objectless*. The difference between effective demand based on money and ineffective demand based on my need, my passion, my wish, etc., is the difference between *being* and *thinking*, between the idea which merely *exists* within me and the idea which exists as a *real object* outside of me.¹⁹

In short, 'money is the alienated ability of mankind'; whatever I would like to possess, whatever attribute I lack, can be purchased by means of money. Money is not just one thing to be desired among others, but it is the 'general equivalent' of desire; it is the means of whatever I desire, including beauty and

16 Lordon and Orlean 2008, p. 209.

17 Matheron 1969, p. 222.

18 Fischbach 2005, p. 35.

19 Marx 1964, p. 104.

love. This shift in the relative importance of money, a shift in what could be called the affective economy, can be historicised. Marx is writing within a more fully developed market society, in which not only is money able to buy more, encompassing all of the qualities of social existence, but people are able to do less, as labour is fragmented and deskilled.²⁰ It is this social transformation that changes money from one object of desire to the focus of all desire.²¹ The development of the market and the destruction of various forms of collective or direct production of use values increases the love of money, where love is understood in its rigorously Spinozist sense as that which appears to represent an increase in one's power of acting. The affective dimension of money is constituted not just in terms of its relation to objects of desire, to that which it can purchase and the qualities it can realise, but also in terms of the general transformation of social relations, the fragmentation and break down of other social relations, other ways of combining and maximising one's striving.²² If with money the 'individual carries his social power, as well as his bond with society, in his pocket', as Marx writes, this is only because social power has already been broken down in other forms.²³ Money expands beyond its limited role in the *Ethics*, relegated to a remark in the Appendix to Part Four, but it does so on grounds developed by Spinoza in which relations to objects are situated within the changing relations of power and affects.

The relation to the second axis, that of hope and fear, is no less complex than the relation to the object of desire. The initial definitions are fairly basic: hope and fear are either an inconstant joy or sadness 'which has arisen from the image of a future or past whose outcome we doubt' (EIIIP18S). At the most basic level, hope and fear constitute another extension of joy and sadness, extended now not just to some object, as in the case of love and hate, but to an object or outcome that is or is not certain. Hope and fear constitute an extreme point of vacillation of the affects, the point where one affect slides over into the other; there is no hope without fear and no fear without hope. Hope and fear are the affective relation to the future, to events that we can neither confidently predict nor definitely preclude. In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza situates hope and fear, the general uncertainty of the future, as the necessary precondition of any superstition or religion, arguing that if men were able to exercise complete control over fortune, they would not be subject to the vacillation of hope and fear. This uncertainty is part of the fundamental condition of

20 Lordon 2014, p. 7.

21 Marx 1973, p. 222.

22 Lordon and Orlean 2008, p. 222.

23 Marx 1973, p. 157.

humanity. However, this fundamental condition is subject to two fundamental variations. First, there is the history of superstition itself. Hope and fear send us looking for signs, viewing the past for some sign of the future. This uncertainty of the future is the anthropological condition of superstition. The different religions, which are also different systems of signs, establish different protocols for grasping the present on the basis of the future. The different religions are made up of not just signs and texts, but also protocols of interpretations, ways of making sense of signs.²⁴ They are both products of a certain affective orientation, grounded in a basic uncertainty and conditions for its dissemination. Hope and fear are not entirely limited to the realm of religion, not entirely a matter of scripture and its interpretation, but are also profoundly affected and transformed by the overall social relations that determine their outcome.²⁵ Matheron has argued that the affects of hope and fear can themselves be historicised according to the general transformation of social relations, of the mode of production. An individual or society that is living hand to mouth, in a basic relation of sustenance, will be dominated by fear more than hope.²⁶ This relation changes with the increase in security and stability; hope will always be shadowed by fear but the relative dominance of each shifts with a transformation of the basic social relations. An increase in security, in the possibility of survival, shifts the predominant affect from fear to hope. With this shift, with this increase in stability, there is also the possibility to increase knowledge, to begin to causally understand rather than simply interpret the world, to look for knowledge rather than signs. Some degree of social stability is the necessary social condition for even individual knowledge. It is possible to argue for determinism from the side of social forces, as material security diminishes the role of fear and ultimately makes it possible to surpass the uncertainty of hope, passing into the realm of knowledge. It is equally possible to argue for a determination from the side of superstition and its imaginary constitution, as images of possible fears overwhelm the present. Hope and fear are grounded not just on the perception of the present as an apprehension of the future; they are also based on an interpretation of the past. Interpretation can override material relations producing a fear or hope that is based not on the immediate present, but on its interpretation, an interpretation grounded on the past and on scripture. As much as the transformation of material relations, the scarcity and availability of objects of desire, determines and effects hope and fear, the transformations of hope

24 Vinciguerra 2005, p. 208.

25 Lordon 2014, p. 24.

26 Matheron 1969, p. 133.

and fear, the general sense of security and insecurity drive and determine the desire for objects. This is especially true of money in its various forms, which is often hoarded in moments of doubt and fear.²⁷ Hope and fear are not just the conjunction of the relations of security and insecurity in the present, but they encompass the real and the imaginary relation to those relations as they extend over time, to borrow Althusser's formulation of ideology. The affective relation to the object, to the entirety of one's material conditions, and the affective relation to the future, to temporality, continually intersect and short-circuit each other.

In a different but related manner, Matheron divides these two affective relations as alienations, referring to the first as economic alienation, and the second as ideological alienation. Alienation is defined less in terms of some fundamental loss of essence than as a reversal in which effects are taken as causes. As Matheron writes,

The progress of consciousness is subject to a double alienation. On the one hand there is a 'social alienation' [*aliénation mondaine*], that can be called economic, provided that we give this word the largest possible sense: by which we unconditionally attach value to particular objects that surround us, valuing them as positive or negative, which we consider to be 'goods' (worldly goods) or as 'bad', and which we will now devote our lives to pursuing and fleeing. On the other hand there is an ideological alienation, both cause and effect of the first: that by which we transpose our passions and beliefs into an ontology, developing an inverted vision of the world, a vision outlined by the traditional view of the cosmos: a universal teleology and hierarchy of goods, which gives a privileged place to man, and, as the keystone of the system, an undefined God. It is this double alienation, which will control the whole course of our emotional life.²⁸

Two fundamental questions or problems, at least for an examination of affective composition, stem from this schema. The first, as we have already seen, has to do with the relation between these two different 'alienations', the particular way in which the ideological alienation is both cause and effect of the first. Matheron's formulation is reminiscent of Balibar's schema discussed in the first Excursus (although this similarity is perhaps more accurately described as Matheron's influence on Balibar). Balibar focused on the constitutive relations

²⁷ Lordon 2014, p. 18.

²⁸ Matheron 1969, p. 112, my translation.

of mode of subjection and mode of production, the intersection of imaginary relations and material conditions, emphasising the necessary displacement of the economic through the imaginary. For Matheron, both the economy and ideology are considered alienations, effects taken as causes, in which the evaluation of the object is taken as the cause rather than the effect of desire. For both Balibar and Matheron, the economic, the relation to objects, only exists in and through the relation to ideology, to the imaginary constitution of the world and our striving in it. The assertion that these two alienations exist 'as cause and effect', in Matheron's account, or through a fundamental 'short-circuit' in which real and imaginary relations affect each other, in Balibar's account, is less an ultimate statement of causality, of the priority of material to ideas, than a problem to be necessarily analysed in the specific composition of the historical moment. At every given moment we are dealing both with a relation to the world of objects, defined in terms of their scarcity and availability, and to a relation to the future, defined in terms of hope and fear. Determination must be grasped from its specific instance.

Which brings us to the second problem, the question of alienation in the context of Spinoza's ontology and anthropology. The concept or problem of alienation has a long history in Marxism, but its sense is primarily derived from Marx's early works informed by Feuerbach and Hegel. Alienation was primarily understood as the misrecognition of one's externalisation as God or the figures of spirit, which were products misrecognised as causes. The early Marx's materialist revision shifted this process from the heavens to earth; activity is no longer mental but physical labour power, which, in its alienated form, is private property. Alienation in Spinoza would necessarily be something other than a process of externalisation and misrecognition, intersecting with the division between adequate and inadequate ideas. Matheron's understanding of alienation is framed by the gap between how one represents the world to oneself and the actual causes that determine not only the world, but also such representations. We are alienated from objects insofar as we see them as possessing qualities, such as being good and bad, independent of and prior to our striving, and we are alienated from the world insofar as we fail to see that it is indifferent to our hopes and fears. Signs and symbols are always our projections. The sense of alienation profoundly changes from Marx to Spinoza: it is no longer a loss of the self into God, spirit, or the object, but rather a loss of the connection with the constitutive conditions that constitute one's particular subjectivity, what could be called, following Fischbach, the loss of a world.²⁹ The apotheosis

29 Fischbach 2005, p. 20.

of Spinoza's sense of alienation is not the externalisation of the self in some structure or institution, but the failure to recognise that the self is already constituted by the relations that make up structures or institutions. For Spinoza, we are never more alienated than when we consider ourselves as 'kingdoms within a kingdom'.

As much as Spinoza's critique makes it possible to offer a reversal of the conventional sense of alienation, inverting the terms of loss from self to world, Spinoza's ontology makes it difficult to think any idea of loss or estrangement of one's essence. For Spinoza, humankind's essence, humankind's striving or *conatus*, is always actual.³⁰ The inadequate ideas and passive affects that condition our desires without us being aware of them are as much actualisations of this essence as adequate ideas and joyful affects. It is not just that an ontology of immanence, an ontology without transcendence, makes it difficult to posit any separation between self and world, which a concept of alienation would seem to require, but that Spinoza's definition of desire as man's essence means that this essence is always actualised in passive or active affects. The fundamental challenge of Spinoza's ontology is to think the specific articulation of power, the capacity to affect and be affected, without recourse to an essence that can be lost or regained. This is consistent with the general idea of compositionality, which eschews alienation as a relation to a human essence in favour of a general understanding of the historical conflict of forces.³¹ In Spinoza, every existence must be considered a combination of activity and passivity, imagination and reason, an existence that is a historically situated articulation of essence rather than its loss. Or, if one needed a Marxist reference, the reality of the human essence is 'the ensemble of social relations'.³²

As we have seen, Spinoza's affective composition offers two general axes, each grounded on the fundamental relation of joy and sadness. The first focuses on what broadly could be considered the relation to the object, understanding that the object is less some concrete thing than it is the system of material relations that constitute and transform the basic condition of striving. While the second focuses on what could generally be called the temporal dimension of existence, hope and fear situated between memory and expectation. For Spinoza, this temporal dimension is also the dimension of superstition, of relation as the projection of hopes and fears. As much as the initial articulation of these axes is grounded in Spinoza's historical moment in which market

30 Sévérac 2005, p. 41.

31 Berardi 2009, p. 44.

32 Marx 1970, p. 122.

relations were secondary to the question of scriptural interpretation, they can be adapted to other historical conjunctures. Doing so is not just a matter of plugging in new variables, new objects of desire and new texts that mediate the apprehension of the future. It also entails returning to the fundamental problem of how to think the conjunction of activity and passivity, imagination and reason, in each composition.

Drawing on the connection between Simondon and Spinoza, we could say that this intersection of a relation to an object and a temporal dimension constitutes a 'structure of feeling' in Raymond Williams's sense. It is a structure that is simultaneously individual, or the ground for individuation, constituting the most intimate dimension of subjectivity, but collective, or transindividual, in that its constitutive relations, terms, and points of reference are immediately shared. As Simondon writes, 'there is a collective to the extent that an emotion is structured'.³³ However, the term structure is not meant to obscure the fundamental metastability of this relation. Simondon and Spinoza give different names for and offer different accounts of metastability, the first focusing on the tension between affects and sensation, emotion and perception, while the latter posits a fundamental ambivalence to any affective relation, as things and relations are simultaneously the cause of love and hate, hope and fear. The structure of feeling that defines each historical moment is neither a structure that stands apart from and prior to the individuals that constitute it, nor is it just a purely personal or individual feeling. Neither is it something fixed and determined, only changed by exceptional events. In a word, it is transindividual. It cannot be resolved, passing from metastability to stability, but can only be transformed into different metastable relations, defined by different tensions.

The affective composition of society must intertwine the striving of this or that individual with the general striving of society, the conatus of the individual with the conatus of the general mode of production, what Lordon calls colinearisation.³⁴ Marx famously defined this problem with respect to capitalism as follows: 'The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition, and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident natural laws'.³⁵ This problem of the fundamental habit, or ingenium, is analogous to, and intersects with, the fundamental political problem, the problem of obedience, the production of a habit of obedience.

33 Simondon 2005, p. 211.

34 Lordon 2010, p. 33.

35 Marx 1977, p. 899.

These problems are different on two counts. First, the initial impetus for economic activity, for working, is not some article of faith, some fundamental belief in the just or sound nature of the economy, but the simple fact that one needs food and shelter to survive. As Marx writes, the capitalist mode of production depends in part on the 'worker's drives for self-preservation and propagation'.³⁶ The desire for food and shelter is immediate, reinforced daily by the desire for the basic necessities; its constant present tense makes it a powerful motive force. As much as the immediate desire for survival, the need for food and shelter, underlies wage labour, this 'immediate' striving must be turned away from other means of survival, from its connection to other pre-existing forms of survival or alternatives to wage labour. Marx's account of 'primitive accumulation' is not just the destruction of any commons and the accumulation of wealth; it is also a primitive accumulation of *conatus*, of striving, as it precludes other means of self-preservation.³⁷ The history of every institution, of every practice, is the destruction of certain modes of striving and the creation, or canalisation, of other forms.

Lordon supplements Marx's theorisation of the historical destruction and creation of different modes of production and their corresponding modes of subjection with Spinoza's theory of desire. It is this concept of desire that develops the latter aspect by not only asking a fundamental question, 'Why do people fight for servitude as if it was salvation?', but provides the conditions to answer it. Lordon, like Balibar, stresses that Spinoza's definition of desire reconfigures the essence of humanity. The striving, or *conatus*, that defines humanity is not a desire for any particular thing, nor is it even a desire for survival. It is fundamentally intransitive, without an object or goal.³⁸ What one strives for is defined by the affects, affects that are in turn determined by the encounters and relations that define one's existence. These relations begin with the joys and sadness that define our world around us, but expand to include the very institutions that define our existence. Our love of money is determined as much by the structural exclusion of other means of meeting our desires as by the pleasures it has delivered in the past. We might remember why we have a positive association with this or that thing, but the affects that define our relation to money exceed a biographical fact to encompass a historical situation. The more the conditions of this situation disappear in the recesses of history, the more the desires that they condition appear autonomous.³⁹

36 Marx 1977, p. 718.

37 Albiac 1996, p. 15.

38 Lordon 2014, p. 14.

39 Lordon 2014, p. 77.

We believe that money is desirable in and of itself, forgetting the historical conditions that create this object of desire.

Lordon argues that the fundamental transformation necessary to bring Spinoza's affective composition into the present is the fundamental separation between striving, activity, and its object. This separation from the means of production is less a fundamental loss, as it is in accounts of alienation, than it is a fundamental transformation of activity. There is an indifference to the activity itself, the goals of the particular activity are stripped of their meaning, their particular orientations of good and bad, perfect and imperfect. As much as we might affectively attach ourselves to any particular job, any particular task, developing our potential and relations, becoming the cause of our joy, this is secondary to the desire, and need, for money. There is thus an affective split at the core of the labour process, between the possible love of my own activity and its results. What we could call the affective composition of labour is how, at a given moment in time, these two aspects are valued or devalued, how much joy is sought in the activity of labour itself, or how much is sought in terms of the accumulation it makes possible. This shift between activity and object is complicated, being both cause and effect of the changing relations of hope and fear in a given historical moment.

Lordon offers a sketch of this history of the affective composition of labour, framed in terms of the shift between Fordism and post-Fordism. We will examine this transformation in the next chapter, as a similar economic argument underlies both Bernard Stiegler's and Paolo Virno's engagements with transindividuality as a critique of political economy. The first period, that of Fordism, is defined by its intersecting transformations of both the separation of activity from value and the affective investment of consumption. Labour is simplified and fragmented, stripped of pleasures and mastery. The division of labour pre-exists Fordism, but is intensified with the assembly line. What really begins to define Fordism is the combination of the fragmentation of labour with the pleasures of consumption. Ford's famous 'five dollar day' increased the spending power of consumers.⁴⁰ The affective composition of Fordism could be described as a fundamental reorganisation of conatus, of striving, away from labour, from activity, and towards consumption. As Stuart Ewen states, summarising this transformation, 'Scientific production promised to make the conventional notion of the self-reliant producer/consumer anachronistic'.⁴¹ The worker's activity is fragmented, made part of a whole that exceeds it, becom-

40 Lordon 2014, p. 29.

41 Ewen 2001, p. 24.

ing as much passivity as activity. The sadness of work, its exhaustion, is compensated for with the joys of consumption. This transformation from an affective investment in work to an affective investment in consumption could also be described as a shift from active joy, joy in one's capacity to act and the transformation of action, to passive joy.

Pascal Sévérac has argued that passive joys, joys that register an increase in one's power that one is not the cause of, function as a fundamental barrier to becoming active.⁴² Sévérac thus fundamentally modifies a general picture of Spinoza's affective politics. It is not a matter of an opposition between sadness and joy, passivity and activity, as thinkers like Deleuze often present it. For Sévérac, this division, which culminates in the idea of a force separated from what it is capable of, too readily reproduces the idea of a loss of essence. An attentiveness to the idea of passive joy, a joy that one is not the cause of, fundamentally transforms this stark opposition. All the various modes have their specific joys and loves; Spinoza is attentive to the particular pleasure of the drunk, and other passive joys, such as those of the infant or the gossip.⁴³ Sadness is not a necessary component of passivity. This is not to say, however, that all joys are equal. There is still a fundamental inactivity, a pathology, to these joys, which earns them the name 'passive'.⁴⁴ Sévérac's reading has two primary effects for an understanding for the affective composition of labour. First, it offers clarification for what is meant by activity; activity is not some specific action, but is the capacity to transform the very conditions of activity. Active joy is not a norm, but the capacity to create new norms. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Sévérac argues that passive joys function as a barrier to becoming active. This argument is based on Spinoza's understanding of the partial nature of passive joys. Spinoza argues that such joys can be excessive because of their attachment to one 'part of the body which is affected more than the others' (EIVP44S). As Sévérac argues, parts in this sense can include not just the body's organs, such as those of taste or sexual pleasure, but also the impressions and memories, and their corresponding ideas. Just as passive joys focus on one part of the body, so passive ideas are isolated from the common relations of ideas. Passivity is not necessarily a sadness, an alienation; it is the fixation on an idea or memory, even one that brings us joy, that is outside of one's control. It is from this perspective that it is possible to think of not only the passivity at the heart of the fixation on money, an idea and passive joy,

42 Sévérac 2005, p. 23.

43 Deleuze 1990, p. 261.

44 Sévérac 2005, p. 345.

but also the pleasures of consumption. These pleasures are not only passive, subject to the marketing and control of others, but also partial, engaging this or that pleasure rather than the capacity to produce and transform the very possibility of becoming active. As Lordon argues, 'Subjection, even when it is happy, consists fundamentally in locking employees in a restricted domain of enjoyment'.⁴⁵

The Fordist compromise can thus be distinguished from later, post-Fordist, articulations of affects, transformations that can also be described through a transformation of work and consumption. Broadly speaking, these transformations can initially be described by a dismantling of the security and stability of work. The Fordist compromise carried with it a dimension of stability, brought about by collective bargaining and the centrality of the contract.⁴⁶ Post-Fordism, as it is defined by Lordon, is first and foremost a transformation of the norms and structures that organise and structure action. As such it is fundamentally asymmetrical; workers are exposed to more and more risk, while capitalists, specifically those concerned with financial capital, are liberated from the classical risks of investment.⁴⁷ This loss of security for the worker fundamentally changes the affective dimension of money. It is no longer an object of hope, the possible means of realising one's desires, but becomes that which wards off fear. Money becomes part of the desire for security, the only possible security: one's skills, one's actions, will have no value in the future, but money always will.⁴⁸ One could understand this shift from Fordism to post-Fordism as a shift from a regime of hope (tinged with fear) to a regime of fear (tinged with hope). Hope and fear cannot be separated, but that does not mean that a given affective composition is not defined more by one than the other. Following this it could be argued that precarity is best understood as an affective concept. It is less a matter of some objective shift in the status of security than it is a shift in how work and security are perceived.⁴⁹ If precarity can be used to adequately describe contemporary economic life, it is due less to the fact that everyone is working under some kind of temporary or part-time contract (although these have become significant), and more to the fact that a constant sense of insecurity infuses every work situation.⁵⁰ Precarity affects even stable employment through its technological transformation.

45 Lordon 2014, p. 107.

46 Lordon 2002, p. 70.

47 Citton 2012, p. 68.

48 Lordon 2014, p. 44.

49 Bernant 2011, p. 201.

50 Southwood 2011, p. 16.

It is always possible to be working or at least in touch with work, and a generalised anxiety infuses all of work, as more indirect measures of productivity replace the productivity of the assembly line.⁵¹ Work is further abstracted, not just from its object, but also from the activity itself as the activity loses any internal standard by which it can be judged. Generalised insecurity, constant contact, and the uncertainty of evaluation define the post-Fordist economy of fear.

The shift from Fordism to post-Fordism cannot just be described as a shift from hope to fear, from a desire for money grounded on the expanding terrain of a good life to a desire grounded on insecurity of the future. It is a fundamentally different affective composition, one that transforms the relation to work as much as money. As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello argue in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, one of the central aspects of post-Fordism, at least at the level of the language of managers and economists, is its presentation of insecurity as opportunity.⁵² The breakdown of the security that functioned as the backdrop of Fordist desire, making possible a linear arrow of accumulation, is presented as liberation from bureaucracy and control. The constant movement from project to project, the lack of stability and long-term connections, is attached not to fear, the loss of security, but to hope, to the constant ability to make new connections, to break with the past in the name of a new future. As work becomes increasingly insecure, less and less capable of providing a linear and stable progression, it becomes more and more consuming of time and energy. Post-Fordism is a massive rearticulation not only of the relation to money, becoming both an object of desire and fear, but also of risk. The new spirit of capitalism revalorises risk.

Far from being a return to some fundamental fear, post-Fordism demands the highest coefficient of colinearisation, the correlation of individual striving and the striving of the firm. Work is no longer defined as something endured, as a necessary passivity that is exchanged for money, for the joys of consumption. Work instead becomes the terrain of self-realisation and actualisation. This transformation is not just a matter of a fundamentally different representation of the breakdown of stability, the presentation of insecurity as freedom, itself a variant of the spontaneous philosophy of the sphere of consumption, but also marks a breakdown of the boundaries separating work from life. This is in part an effect of the instability of work, as jobs become more precarious, or even appear to be precarious, work itself becomes a kind of perpetual applic-

⁵¹ Berardi 2009, p. 32.

⁵² Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 64.

ation for the job.⁵³ The use of the phrase ‘networking’ reflects this breakdown; it is a social idea not just for times of unemployment, when making new contacts becomes paramount, but it is also an ideal that encompasses all social relations. Weak ties, the ties that connect one to co-workers and colleagues, become invested with maximum hope and fear, as any tie, any relation, could possibly alter one’s future. This precarious investment in relations with others is further complicated by the proliferation of technologies of sharing and surveillance that make self-presentation not just an isolated moment, for the workday or job interview, but a constant task. The networking, flexibility, and constant self-surveillance of the job search become a defining characteristic of contemporary labour. All the while this characteristic is purported to be not a repression of one’s fundamental self and identity, but its expression.⁵⁴ It is not just that the networking and the labour of appearing motivated, engaged, and enthusiastic has to be a kind of deep acting, demanding a great deal of commitment, but that the workplace also encompasses those activities and relations that would seem to be outside of it, increasingly trying to make leisure, play, and creativity part of its structure. As Nina Power argues, ‘The personal is no longer just political, it’s economic through and through’.⁵⁵

The division between Fordism and post-Fordism sketched above is not meant as a decisive or even adequate description of the economic shift of the last several decades. It is necessarily schematic, perhaps overly so. In a later volume, *La Société des Affects*, Lordon augments this schema by turning to two of the final propositions of Part Three of *Ethics*. In those final passages, Spinoza argues that there are as many loves and hates ‘as there are species of objects by which we are affected’ (EIIIP56), and that ‘each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of one from the essence of the other’ (EIIIP57). The multiple objects, and multiple strivings, constitute the basis for multiple affective compositions, each shifting and ambivalent as the same object is both the object of love and hate, and the same individual comes to hate what they once loved. Rereading these propositions back into the schematic history of different affective modes of production does not dispense with the latter, shattering it into a pure multiplicity where a thousand flowers bloom. Rather, these differences, variations of love and hate, must be understood as variations on a dominant theme. As Lordon argues, there will always be bosses who are kind and generous, and work situations that engage

53 Southwood 2010, p. 27.

54 Cederström and Fleming 2012, p. 10.

55 Power 2009, p. 26.

a broader range of activity, but these differences and deviations are ultimately just different expressions of the same fundamental relation. The nicest boss in the world cannot fundamentally alter the fundamental structure of Fordist or post-Fordist labour conditions; the affective engagement at the level of individual intention does nothing to alter the basic relation with the activity and object.⁵⁶ This affective veneer, the work of human relations, is not inconsequential: more than the role it plays in motivating individual workers, the real work it does is in producing the appearance of difference, a society of individual actions rather than persistent structures. Much of the quotidian criticism of work, or of capitalism in general, focuses on the differences: we complain about this boss, or protest against this big corporation for being particularly offensive, but do not address the fundamental relation of exploitation or the profit motive which exceeds the different ways in which it is instantiated. The plurality, a plurality dictated by what Spinoza would call the order of nature, the different ways in which things have affected us, takes precedence over the perception of common relations.

To this emphasis on plurality as a perpetual alibi, we can add another thesis from Spinoza. As Spinoza argues, we are more likely to hate or love an act that we consider to be free than one which is considered necessary. On this last point, Spinoza's affective economy intersects with one of the central points of Marx's critique of political economy, that of fetishism, which could in part be summed up as perceiving the capitalist mode of production as necessary and natural rather than the product of social relations. The naturalisation of the economy, its existence as self-evident natural laws, makes it difficult for us to hate it, to become indignant. The affective economy of capitalism is one in which it is easier to become angry at and grateful for the deviations, the cruel bosses and the benevolent philanthropists, while the structure itself, the fundamental relations of exploitation, are deemed too necessary, too natural, to merit indignation.

Lordon, like Balibar, understands Spinoza's definition of desire as 'man's very essence' to be the basis for a transindividual articulation of the individual. In each case, the essence of man is nothing apart from its specific affects and relations. For Lordon, these relations are determined primarily by the economic structures from wage labour to labour regulations that orient striving, resituating the goals and objectives of our primary desires. In contrast to this, Balibar argues that transindividuation always passes through the other scene, as the mode of production determines and is affected by the mode of subjectation.

56 Lordon 2013, p. 94.

Lordon acknowledges that economy cannot function without the particular characters and individuals, both real and imagined, that populate it, from the successes and failure of parents and co-workers to that of the entrepreneur.⁵⁷ We could argue that this was already apparent in Marx's critique of 'so-called primitive' accumulation, which was as much a critical engagement with a particular narrative of capitalist accumulation, one predicated on saving versus squandering, as it was an account of the genesis of capitalist subjection.⁵⁸ For Lordon, the imagination functions less as an 'other scene', as a fundamental displacement of the economy, than as a sort of supplement that continues through the same fundamental process. The order and connection of the orientation of desire and the imagination is the same. In each case it is a matter of a kind of canalisation of desire, as narratives respond to and reorient desires. As Yves Citton, who Lordon draws from on this point, argues, narratives and stories structure the orientation of desire, providing scenarios through which we understand existence, while simultaneously being structured by desire; a narrative that did not animate desires, did not invoke passion, would never be read or imagined.⁵⁹ In this view, capitalism is less a mode of production, a narrowly economic set of relations determining how goods are produced and distributed, than it is an entire reorganisation of desire. Lordon describes the 'symbolic violence' of the imagination as follows:

Symbolic violence consists then properly speaking in the production of a double imaginary, the imaginary fulfilment, which makes the humble joys assigned to the dominated appear sufficient, and the imaginary of powerlessness, which convinces them to renounce any greater ones to which they might aspire.⁶⁰

The satisfactions of consumer society and the dreams of a better job combine with the fetishised nature of the entire economy to funnel desires into the established channels of careers and consumption. These objects are reinforced by an entire cultural imaginary. (This point will be returned to in the final chapter).

It is at this point, where imagination and desire intersect in a total colinearisation of desire, that it becomes possible to ask the question as to how transformation is possible. This is, of course, the classic question of Spinoza's

57 Lordon 2013, p. 76.

58 Read 2003, p. 21.

59 Citton 2010b, p. 101.

60 Lordon 2014, p. 110, translation slightly modified.

determinism coupled with a more contemporary question that follows every functional description of capitalism. If desire, or striving, is entirely determined by the economy and imagination of capital, how would any change be possible? The answer to this question returns us to the affects and their relation to individuation. As Lordon argues, the determinations are always multiple, as the same object, the same relation, is the source of both pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. The transition from obedience to indignation does not require a will or intention outside of causal relations, just the existing complexity and ambivalence of the causal conditions. To which it is possible to add, in a manner that exceeds Lordon's text, that determinations of desire are never reducible to the capitalist mode of production and its various regimes of accumulation. The canalisation of desire that structures the economy is not the only orientation or terrain of affects; politics, culture, and the nation, and other imaginary identifications, become objects of both love and hatred, joy and sadness.

It is with respect to the question of the multiple determinations of the present that the difference between Spinoza and Simondon on the definition of affects is worth revisiting. Whereas Spinoza argued that affects are pre-individual because their objects are ambivalent, always passing between love and hate, hope and fear, Simondon locates a pre-individual dimension to the affects that is distinct from the emotions. If emotions are individuated, nameable as individual and collective experiences of feeling, then affects are the phase shifts that do not connect to nameable states or recognised experiences. They are the feelings that pass beneath or between the discernible emotions and individuations, the strange feelings that we can never exactly name. The difference between Spinoza and Simondon with respect to affects makes it possible to articulate the surplus of the pre-individual that accompanies every individuation like a kind of halo or cloud. It is this surplus, as well as the conflicts and contradictions in the present, which opens the possibility for change. In other words, the conditions for the transformation are not to be found in the reservoir of an individual will, but in the transindividual conditions and pre-individual relations that determine the present. It is precisely because these conditions are transindividual, are shared by others, that they can have effects and communicate, and it is precisely because they are pre-individual, touching on the inchoate and metastable dimensions of the current conjuncture, that their effects can truly be transformative.

What we could call the affective composition of the economy is thus the way in which any mode of production both reorganises and is maintained by a fundamental reorganisation of the conatus and striving. The mode of production is nothing other than a particular organisation of desire, and does not exist outside of it. This does not mean, however, that everything is locked in the same

cycle forever reproducing itself. Transindividuality makes it possible to grasp the tensions and ambiguities of affects that open up the potential for transformation. At the same time, it is not clear that the economy can be understood only through its organisation of affects, or whether or not transindividuality can be reduced to the affective dimension. In the next chapter, we will turn to a more thorough engagement with the economy, and its transformations, with Bernard Stiegler and Paolo Virno, ultimately returning to the larger question, namely that of the different dimensions of transindividuation, political and economic, in the final chapter.

The Hidden Abode of Individuation: The Political Economy of Transindividuality in Stiegler and Virno

In Chapter 2, I argued that Simondon's work offered a new critical perspective on individuation, in some sense deploying an entire ontology and conceptual vocabulary against the priority attached to either the individual or to representing society or nature as an individual. However, as I argued in that chapter, the promise of Simondon's concept is marked by several conceptual blind spots not only with respect to his precursors, Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, but also more importantly with respect to the central problem of shifting transindividuality from an ontology of relations to a critical theory of political economy and social reality. It is for this reason that Simondon's thought can be considered less a fully developed theory of social relations, politics, or capital than itself a kind of pre-individual conceptual tool for individuating or developing the idea. Two philosophers who have done the most to utilise Simondon's vocabulary with respect to politics and the critique of political economy are Bernard Stiegler and Paolo Virno. Stiegler and Virno were briefly discussed in Chapter 2 in terms of their particular manner of 'individuating' Simondon, of resolving the particular tensions and relations. Stiegler sought to develop transindividuality into a theory of technology, or technicity, reading Simondon's later work into his early work and beyond to develop a theory of the fundamentally prosthetic nature of memory and individuation. In contrast to this, Virno reads transindividuality as the basis of a philosophical anthropology framed between humanity's generic capacities and their specific historical articulation. While both of the readings will be revisited in what follows, what is at stake in this chapter is less how they read Simondon than how they use Simondon's concepts to interpret the current conjuncture of contemporary capitalism. Stiegler and Simondon's criticisms of capital separate according to the division Marx (and Hegel) posited between consumption and production as not only two different economic spheres, but two different individuations.

Transindividuation and the Becoming Proletarian of the Consumer: Stiegler

Bernard Stiegler's *For a New Critique of Political Economy* opens with a claim about the status of political economy. Stiegler claims that 'philosophy of our time has abandoned the project of a critique of political economy, and this constitutes a disastrous turn of events'.¹ It is precisely this abandonment that Stiegler aims to rectify. However, Stiegler is not calling for a return to Marx in anything remotely resembling an orthodox form, and Stiegler's work is as much a critique of Marxism as it is an engagement with the failings of contemporary philosophy. Stiegler's understanding of the economy is less a matter of a base determining a philosophical superstructure than it is a matter of grasping a fundamental aspect of contemporary individuation. The economy does not constitute a base upon which a superstructure could be erected, but functions transversally, cutting through the entire relation of individual and collective identity. 'Political economy is a way of organizing transindividuation not only at the level of symbolic exchange, but also at the level of the exchange of commodities'.² In order to understand this it is necessary to recast our understanding of political economy, to rethink what is produced and circulated along with commodities and money.³

Stiegler's redefinition of the relation between transindividuation and political economy is itself predicated on two transformations of Simondon's conceptual articulation. First, Stiegler stresses the essentially temporal character of every transindividual individuation. Every individuation is a process, a movement from an initial metastable condition, defined by tensions and relations, towards a future, a future posited less as an endpoint than a telos. It is a process, as Simondon argued, but one framed between memory, the past, and the future. This process defines both the individuation of subjects and collectives, as well as their mutually constitutive intersection. Simondon argues that transindividuation can be grasped as the intersection of the temporality of the individual and the collective, the interweaving of the individual's timeline, striving and goals, and that of society, its history and future.⁴ Transindividuation is inher-

1 Stiegler 2010b, p. 18.

2 Stiegler 2010b, p. 61.

3 Stiegler, like Simondon, understands Marx to articulate a theory of base and superstructure in which the former determines the latter, but he stresses that this division has become increasingly untenable in the age of contemporary, or hyperindustrial capitalism (Stiegler 2004a, p. 70).

4 Simondon 2005, p. 293.

ently temporal, caught between a past and a future. What Stiegler adds to this process is a deepening of the temporal dimension of this process, situating individuation in the intersection of memory and history. The addition of memory and history fundamentally disorients any understanding of individuation as a simple linear progression, a progression from less to more individuation. Stiegler's transformation of Simondon's thought fundamentally puts into question the latter's linear model from nature, or pre-individual, to spirit, or transindividual. For Stiegler, transindividuation is rectilinear, as the collective products of one generation become the pre-individual basis of a subsequent generation's individuation. Stiegler breaks Simondon's tentative identification of the pre-individual with nature and the transindividual with spirit, stressing that the basis of our individuation is not some putative nature, but an inheritance of texts, tools, and technology. This is the second, and most important, transformation of Simondon's thought. Stiegler's reading of Simondon returns to the initial identification of transindividuality and technology; transindividuality is the technical milieu, and this milieu, in the form of artefacts and writings, forms the basis of collective history and individual memory.

Stiegler argues that there are three memories in the broadest sense of the term, each of which corresponds to different individuations. The first corresponds to biological individuation itself; it is the memory stored in the genetic code, the inheritance of the species. The second memory, the epigenetic, is the memory of the individual's experiences, what he calls secondary retentions. These two are part of the memory of every living thing. The third memory, what Stiegler refers to as epiphylogenetic, is made up of the memories that have never been lived, memories that are received in the form of signs, inscriptions, and writings. It is this memory that defines and differentiates psychic and collective individuation, which forms the basis for culture.⁵ Genetic memory and individual memory are shared by all living things, constituting the basis for biological and fundamental psychic individuation, but the memory that is transcribed in objects and texts defines the transindividual individuation that is constitutive of psychic and collective individuation.⁶

Stiegler's understanding of transindividuation is thoroughly wedded to the question of a philosophical anthropology, to determination of the human. However, this anthropology is not tied to the problematic of the differentiation of the human from animals, a search for the particular differentia, speech,

5 Stiegler 2008a, p. 30.

6 Stiegler 1998, p. 141.

thought, or politics, that makes the human animal distinct.⁷ Nor is Stiegler's philosophical anthropology concerned with identity and difference, hierarchy and equality, within the definition of the human, as was the case with Balibar. Stiegler's philosophical anthropology starts from a different ground of the relation between humanity and history, one based on the identity of man as the tool-making animal. Or it would be more accurate to say man is the animal made by its tools, since it is precisely the interplay between humanity and technology, maker and made, that is in question here. It would be just as accurate to say that for Stiegler, following the work of palaeontologists such as André Leroi-Gourhan, man is made by tools as much as a maker of tools.⁸ The 'who' cannot be separated from the 'what', anthropogenesis, the formation of humankind, from prosthesis, the creation of tools and signs.⁹ These tools and signs, which are both a creation and an inheritance, define humanity, breaking humankind from instinctual reactions and idiosyncratic experiences, constituting the basis for collectivity, for what Leroi-Gourhan calls ethnic groups.¹⁰ Human beings are born into a world of tools and signs, into an inheritance, which they adopt. Thus, the constitution of humanity is the constitution of collectivity; individuation is transindividuation. Individuation, of both the collective and the individual, is defined neither by the genetic inheritance of instincts nor by living memory, but by the tertiary retentions of tools and signs.

Tertiary memory, the memory which is materially inscribed and inherited, is most obviously at work in such cultural objects as books, photographs, and films, but it exceeds such easily recognised cultural inheritance to encompass the memory that is included in any tool, any instrument. Grammaticisation is not just writing, or texts, but any process that spatialises and temporalises the flows and fluxes of experiences, making possible their repetition.¹¹ As Stiegler writes:

7 Stiegler 1998, p. 137.

8 Leroi-Gourhan 1993, p. 114.

9 Stiegler 1998, p. 50.

10 'Although the role of our anatomical and physiological heritage is undoubtedly decisive, we must finally conclude that spontaneous behavior in the human species is overlaid by behavior acquired by the social community' (Leroi-Gourhan 1993, p. 231). Leroi-Gourhan thus articulates two of the fundamental ideas of transindividuality expressed in our readings of Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx, in which there is no natural basis for social institutions (or, as Spinoza writes, 'nature creates no nations'), but these institutions are in turn the basis for individuation.

11 Stiegler 2011a, p. 75.

When I inherit an object, a flint-cutting tool, for example, I inherit through its mode of use, that is, the gestures, the motor behaviours that lead to the production of the flint-cutting tool. With the appearance of technical objects, a new stratum of memory is constituted, which permits the transmission from generation to generation of individual experience and permits mutualisation in the form of what we call a *we*.¹²

Stiegler's assertion evokes without citing the philosophy of the tool (or machine) that we have already seen at work in both Hegel and Marx, in which the tool is understood as a process of transindividuation, a process in which individual skill intersects with general social knowledge and competence. However, what is more important for Stiegler is the fundamental assertion that there is no transindividuation, no constitution of an 'I' and a 'We' without the transductive constitution of 'what', the formation of a materialised memory in machines, tools, and texts.¹³ To say that this is a transductive relation is to argue that there is not a causal relation between the two. It is not a matter of technology structuring society or society determining its technology; rather, the relation is one of mutual individuation, the formation of a culture and the formation of a technology. As much as we inherit the material inscription of memory, we also produce our own, we write to learn and remember, participating in our own individuation.

In arguing for the primacy of the inherited memory, the memory of texts, tools, and artefacts, Stiegler actively problematises the phenomenological conception of memory, the role of living memory. Stiegler's broad series of references and influences draws from Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl and Heidegger's understanding of temporality and history, arguing that both overlook the inherited memories of traces and texts, which is the precondition for history and biography, collective and individual memory. According to the schema outlined by Edmund Husserl, living memory is formed between primary retentions, the retentions that constitute even the most immediate experiences, and secondary retentions that are memories of specific experiences.¹⁴ Primary retentions retain the particular notes and melodies that make music possible, while secondary retentions are the memories of hearing a specific song. The process of forming memories is a process of individuation (an individual is its history, as Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx argued). Memories shape

¹² Stiegler 2009, p. 68.

¹³ Stiegler 2008a, p. 7.

¹⁴ Husserl 1991, p. 47.

future experiences, what we know, what we remember, what we consider relevant. Stiegler outlines the connection between memory and individuation:

I only think differently from others, I only feel differently from others, I only desire differently from others, I only see differently from others – in short, I only exist – because the retentional process in which I consist is unique, and because this retentional process is also a protentional process, that is, it is a process that constitutes horizons of expectations.¹⁵

Memory is a process of individuation, a process in which experiences, senses, and affects singularise and individuate subsequent experiences. Retention is always interpretation. What I perceive is determined by what I recall. It is also always protention, in that what I recall determines my anticipation of what will come next, structuring experience.¹⁶ It is this process that explains why it is that when a soldier sees hoof prints in the mud he thinks of war, but a farmer will think of planting, to use Spinoza's illustration (EIIIP18Schol). For Spinoza and Stiegler, the singularity of experience and impressions is an effect of the history of one's encounters. Memory would be radically singular if it were not for what Stiegler calls collective tertiary retentions, the stuff of cultural memory from tales and stories to novels and films. These stories can be told, or experienced, but in order for that to be possible they have to become materialised in texts and artefacts. These texts and artefacts constitute a tertiary memory that is inherited.¹⁷ Just as the secondary memory acts on the first, as memory shapes our experiences and anticipations, so this third memory acts on both the first and the second, inheritance shapes experience as well.¹⁸ It is not just that what I remember affects what I experience, but what I read, see, or hear, even if I did not experience it directly, shapes what I experience.

This understanding of history as a history of externalisation and interiorisation closely approximates the dialectic of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Stiegler notes this proximity, arguing that the *Phenomenology* can be understood as a drama in which the pre-individual, figured as ethical substance, becomes spirit, becomes the basis of an individuation.¹⁹ The passage from substance to subject, from the in-itself to for-itself, is a history in which the external

15 Stiegler 2011a, p. 112.

16 Stiegler 2011b, p. 60.

17 Stiegler 2010c, p. 6.

18 Stiegler 2004, p. 109.

19 Stiegler 2012, p. 181.

conditions of one's existence, the customs, laws, and norms, become internalised. Conversely, one's initial condition and sensibility become externalised, becoming actions and the product of work. Where Stiegler departs from Hegel, from this process of substance becoming subject, is in insisting on the materiality and the historicity of this process. Exteriorisation is not just the externalisation of thoughts in the form of ethical norms, works, and culture, but their inscription in the form of texts, machinery, and technology. Hegel famously wrote that in modern times the individual 'finds the abstract form ready made', a remark that Stiegler sees as the basis for introducing the historicity of grammatisation, as this abstraction shifts from the textual form of writing, to machinery, and digital communications.²⁰ To say that we find the abstract 'ready made' is, in Stiegler's view, to say that tertiary retentions exceed and overwhelm our secondary retentions: what we have read or seen exceeds what we have experienced.

The identification of transindividuality with tertiary retentions not only opens transindividuality up to its history, but also makes it essentially historical through and through. It is through this history of transindividuality, a history of its changing technological and social transformation of this process of inscription, this grammatisation, that Stiegler approaches political economy. Political economy is less about the contradiction between forces and relations of production than it is a matter of the tension between the supports of productions, the grammatisation of memory in institutions and structures, and the relations of production, the constitution of individuation and subjectivity.²¹ The history of grammatisation, of the inscription and transmission of tertiary retentions, has three basic moments. The first constitutes the long history of writing, the constitution of signs and symbols that make possible the transmission of ideas and culture.²² For Stiegler, this grammatisation somewhat anachronistically makes possible the figure of the citizen. The citizen is a figure of transindividual individuation, but one that necessarily passes through the exteriorisation and interiorisation of laws, of texts.²³ As Stiegler writes,

[T]he citizen is one who decides on the textualized law's meaning, and who in the same gesture self-affirms as this particular citizen, exposing the to-come of that particularity relative to the community as endlessly

²⁰ Hegel 1977, p. 19.

²¹ Stiegler 2006c, p. 59.

²² Stiegler 2011b, p. 142.

²³ Stiegler 2006b, p. 57.

altering itself and thus affirming itself as *différant* from all others – including the reader in any past guise.²⁴

The reading and writing of the law opens up a relation not just between the individual and the collective, an 'I' and a 'we' framed between the tension of the general inscription and singular interpretation, but also between the past and the future.²⁵ The history of the citizen, of its particular grammatisation, is a history in which law is constantly reinterpreted in the name of justice. This reinterpretation crosses divides that are simultaneously temporal and generational, as new interpretations presuppose a new generation, a new reading. Thus, citizenship requires two things, both of which mark it as a particular, albeit long, epoch in the history of individuation: first, there is the grammatisation, the inscription of law itself, which makes it capable of being read, but second is the ideal of justice, as something which exceeds the law, legitimating an interpretation. The citizen is situated between the letter and the spirit of the law. These two are in a constant relation of conflict and determination, whereby laws delimit justice and justice calls the limits of the law into conflict, a conflict framed by the materiality of the law and the ideality of justice.²⁶ The citizen is transindividual individuation that is neither entirely spiritual nor entirely material, but the constant tension of the one with the other, material inscriptions and interpretations, the letter and the spirit.²⁷ Since its inception, the citizen has been generally understood as a combination of giving and receiving orders (as in Aristotle), or sovereign and subject (as in the case of Rousseau).²⁸ This political duality of command and obedience, of giving and receiving the law, is, in Stiegler's interpretation, nothing other than the temporal relation of reading and writing, of inheriting memories and creating new interpretations. Stiegler, like Balibar, defines the citizen as particular transindividual individuation, as a combination of insurrection and constitution. However, whereas Balibar situates this history against the intersection of universality and anthropological

24 Stiegler 2008c, p. 58.

25 Yves Citton has developed the idea of interpretation as a transindividual process situated between the individual and the collective, the past and the future (Citton 2010a, p. 119). Unlike Stiegler, however, Citton does not connect this practice of interpretation to the citizen as a bygone political transindividuation, but rather to the practices of reading and writing that constitute the 'humanities', practices that are jeopardised by the restructuring of knowledge in the image of information.

26 Stiegler 2006c, p. 75.

27 Stiegler 2008b, p. 20.

28 Balibar 2011, p. 56.

difference, on the intersection between the figure of humanity and political belonging, Stiegler situates it against the history of grammatisation, the technical and economic basis of individuation. The transformation of grammatisation, of the technologies of memory and inscription, is thus necessarily a transformation of the citizen as a transindividual individuation. Stiegler's focus is primarily on the technological dimension of this grammatisation, the institutional aspect of their transmission is more or less bracketed. In contrast to this, Balibar argues that the institutional transmission of the fundamental aspect of literacy, the capacity to read and write, situates the generic figure of the citizen within the particular modality of a nation; literacy is always literacy of a particular language. Thus, for Balibar, the transindividual individuation of the citizen cannot be entirely separated from the nation, from the national language and belonging.²⁹ As Balibar argues, drawing on Spinoza's theory of imagination, the citizen is situated not between law and justice, material inscription and ideal interpretation, but rather between rational agreement and imaginary identification, split between citizen and nation. Stiegler's focus on grammatisation as the primary site of transindividuation is thus simultaneously more material, focusing specifically on the materiality of recording and inscription, and more formal, bracketing the social and political dimensions of this transmission, the institutions and content of this transmission. Stiegler has little to say about the institutions that transmit this ability to read and write, institutions that reproduce and maintain identities and exclusions of nation and class.³⁰ Stiegler's history of grammatisation is a history of the transformations of the different technologies of inscription and transformation of knowledge, not of the politics and institutions that organise its dissemination.

Writing, the writing and transmission of texts, constitutes the first stage in the history of grammatisation. There are, of course, important shifts in this history, transformations in the history of reading and writing: the standardisation of language, the printing press, and the rise of literacy are all transformations of grammatisation, but Stiegler does not seem to see these as altering the fundamental relation of textual individuation, only increasing its reach across the globe.³¹ Stiegler does identify Kant, and specifically the idea of a 'public' use of reason, as being fundamental to the Enlightenment, as a particular exception in the long history of writing and grammatisation. But what makes Kant an exception is the fact that he explicitly thematises the relation between a 'what',

29 Balibar 2004, p. 20.

30 Hutnyk 2012, p. 136.

31 Stiegler 2011a, p. 153.

the written text of journals and newspapers, a 'we', the constitution of a public sphere, and an I, an individual task of maturity, or enlightenment.³² (Stiegler continues this general problem of maturity, only now it is not a struggle against the immaturity of the priest who does not dare to know, and instead has a book think for him, but rather the generalised immaturity of consumer society).³³ This is what makes Kant one of the exceptions to the general disavowal of writing in the history of philosophy (a list that also included Michel Foucault). Kant's exception makes it possible to articulate the fundamental grammatisation that constitutes the citizen; what Kant frames in terms of the public and private use of reason, critique and obedience, becomes in Stiegler the disjunct articulation of writing and reading, new and old interpretations.³⁴ This relation, and the public use of reason that it entails, is dependent, however, on a general dissemination not only of texts, but also of habits of reading and paying attention.

The second significant phase in the history of grammatisation is brought about by the industrial revolution, which breaks the connection with the past. As Stiegler writes,

Modernity, which actually begins before the industrial revolution but which is massively, historically realized in it, is our term for the adoption of a new connection to time, the abandonment of a privileged tradition, the definition of new life rhythms, and today an immense confusion throughout retentional mechanisms, finally resulting in an industrial revolution within the condition of adoption's very means of transmission.³⁵

Beyond the break with the past, the primary significance of the industrial revolution is its effect not on writing, laws, and the individuation of the citizen, but on the habits and comportments of day-to-day existence, the memory that is materialised in tools and machines. Stiegler reads Marx through Simondon to examine the industrial revolution through the process of 'proletarianisation': proletarianisation is the loss of individuality, of the particular skills, habits, and knowledge that defined pre-industrial work.³⁶ The industrial revolution, the development of machines, places the skill and knowledge of the worker into

32 Stiegler 2010c, p. 25.

33 Stiegler 2012, p. 51.

34 Kant 1983, p. 42.

35 Stiegler 2011b, p. 92.

36 Stiegler 2010b, p. 32.

the machine itself, making 'the machine itself the virtuoso', as Marx wrote.³⁷ A law, a text, or any written document retains a memory that can never be repeated twice; its recall or recitation is always also a transformation, and a shift of context. Interpreting a text is always reinterpreting it, individuating it in new situations. In contrast to this, a set of instructions or the mechanical repetitions of a machine exist only to be repeated, there is no room for interpretation or individuation. The proletarian is not a citizen, not because she is prohibited from participation in politics or exists in a space defined by fundamentally different rules from those of 'freedom, equality, and Bentham', but because she is subject to a fundamentally different regime of grammatisation, of memory, one which transforms the person, the individual, into nothing but a bodily force, a quantity of labour power. The citizen is constituted by a regime of reading and writing that makes possible a form of knowledge, an action of interpretation, that constituted individuation, while the proletarian is defined by a process of proletarianisation, a loss of knowledge and individuation.³⁸

Stiegler is primarily interested in 'proletarianisation' as a process, a process that is primarily articulated in relation to the loss of skills, knowledge, and individuation through the technological development of the production process. It is the process by which work is routinised, mechanised, and materialised in the machine, a process by which the worker becomes a conscious organ of the machine, rather than the individual standing over it. For Stiegler, the first theorist of proletarianisation was not Marx but Plato. It was the latter who first articulated the idea of externalisation of knowledge as a fundamental loss.³⁹ Like Balibar, Stiegler notes a conceptual distinction between proletarian and

37 Marx 1973, p. 693.

38 Stiegler 2010b, p. 40.

39 Stiegler 2010b, p. 36. Stiegler's invocation of a connection between Plato and Marx calls to mind a similar connection developed in Rancière's work. However, whereas Stiegler argues that this connection is a positive one, connecting both thinkers to the general problem of proletarianisation as grammatisation, Rancière makes the opposite argument. For Rancière, the pinnacle of Plato's idea of proletarianisation as exteriorisation is the figure of the slave in *Meno*, a figure duplicated by Marx's proletariat. As Rancière writes, 'In *Meno*'s slave Plato invented one of the most durable and formidably effective figures of our own thinking: the pure proletarian whom one can always, as need demands, oppose to that of the artisan or slide under his image; the man for whom the possibility of losing his chains exists only by the philosopher's decree, who thus will never lose them except within the rules; the absolute dispossessed whose infinite possibilities should discourage the mediocre and artisanal aspirations of others; the pure autodidact whose virtual omniscience disqualifies the twaddle of working men's doxa and bars the road to autodidacticism's jacks of all trades' (Rancière 2004, p. 36).

the working class in Marx's writing; however, this distinction is not between the political subject of the proletariat in the *Manifesto* and the socio-historical analysis of the working class in *Capital*, as it was for Balibar, but between the socio-historical category and the general process of the loss of knowledge and individuation.⁴⁰ It is this focus on the relationship between proletarianisation and knowledge, a focus that simultaneously limits and expands the definition of the concept that registers both Stiegler's proximity to and distance from Marx. As we argued in Chapter 1, following Balibar, one way to read Marx's critique of political economy is as an interruption of the passage from the particular to the universal, from misrecognition to recognition in Hegel. Stiegler insists on a similar interruption, one that does not hinge on fetishism, on the imaginary representations generated by social relations, but is instead centred round grammatisation, the inscription and reproduction of knowledge. Stiegler reads Marx's concept, or problem, of proletarianisation from Marx's remarks on the loss of all 'individual character and charm' from work in the *Manifesto* to Marx's argument of man becoming nothing more than a 'conscious organ' of the machine in the *Grundrisse*. The unstated concept, or logic, that connects these ideas is that of grammatisation, the inscription and reproduction of knowledge, the knowledge of handicrafts and skilled labour, into machines. For Stiegler, Marx's grasp of technology as proletarianisation, as a destruction of knowledge and individuation, powerfully expressed in the image of humankind reduced to a conscious organ, breaks with any dialectical negation of a negation. As Stiegler argues, Hegel's dialectic of lordship and bondage is a relation of knowledge, the slave's mastery of the world is made possible by his labour which is also an understanding of the world and an externalisation of will and knowledge.⁴¹ This knowledge and discipline compensates for the lack of recognition by the 'master' and makes possible a revolutionary transformation. Stiegler argues that the various ideas of revolutionary consciousness, in which the workers possess some understanding of the social order or historical process through labour, is nothing more than an updating of this idea. The revolution is the consequence of this becoming conscious. Marx's understanding of proletarianisation interrupts the possibility of this direct reversal of the social order, undoing even Marx's revolutionary claims. As Stiegler argues, the current proletarianisation of labour (and life), the externalisation of skills and knowledge into a machine, is an exteriorisation for which any interiorisation is impossible.⁴²

40 Stiegler 2012, p. 208.

41 Stiegler 2012, p. 207.

42 Stiegler 2012, p. 196.

According to Stiegler, as much as Marx interrupted Hegel, positing proletarianisation as that which interrupts the passage from slave to master, he never fully grasped the full implications of proletarianisation. Which is to say that Marx never grasped the extension of proletarianisation from the hidden abode of production to consumption. Marx primarily examined consumption as a necessary endpoint and part of the economic process, but not as a transindividual individuation, a process of the production of subjectivity. The consumption of use values is predominantly left outside of the examination. While this is the dominant tendency, Marx's writings do suggest that consumption needs to be historicised as the transformation of the mode of production, a transformation that includes its effects on social relations, but such remarks are marginal for reasons that are both historical and philosophical. Consumption at the time of Marx's writing was only formally subsumed, as capital produced and circulated the commodities of food, clothing, and shelter that existed in previous economic conditions, hence the examples of coats, coal, and linen that illustrate *Capital*. Which is not to say that Marx does not sometimes historicise consumption. Stiegler cites Marx's statement in the *Grundrisse*, namely 'Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth', as an oblique reference to the constitutive role of consumption.⁴³ However, such isolated remarks do not constitute anything like a theory of the mode of consumption, in which consumption is considered alongside production as a specific transindividual individuation.⁴⁴ While Stiegler's comments would seem to contradict Marx's theorisation of the sphere of circulation as the production of 'freedom, equality, and Bentham', it is important to differentiate exchange, which produces individuals isolated and separated from each other and productive relations, and consumption, which demands an entirely different reorganisation of desire, knowledge, and habits.

Given that Stiegler argues that consumption is something that Marx could not describe, it is striking that he uses the concept of 'proletarianisation' to articulate the constitution of consumer society. At first glance, the use of the term proletarianisation to describe the transindividuation of the consumer would seem to be an analogy with the transformation of the labour process: if proletarianisation is the loss of skills, talents, and knowledge until the worker becomes simply interchangeable labour power, then the broader proletarianisation of daily life is the loss of skills, knowledge, and memory until the indi-

43 Marx 1973, p. 230.

44 Stiegler 2010b, p. 27.

vidual becomes simply purchasing power.⁴⁵ Stiegler's use of proletarianisation is thus simultaneously broader and more restricted than Marx, broader in that it is extended beyond production to encompass relations of consumption and thus all of life, but more restricted in that it is primarily considered with respect to the question of knowledge. The transfer of knowledge from the worker to the machine is the primary case of proletarianisation for Stiegler, becoming the basis for understanding the transfer of knowledge of cooking to microwaveable meals and the knowledge of play from the child to the videogame.⁴⁶ Stiegler does not include other dimensions of Marx's account of proletarianisation, specifically the loss of place, of stability, with its corollary affective dimension of insecurity and precariousness. On this point, it would be difficult to draw a strict parallel between worker and consumer, as the instability of the former is often compensated for by the desires and satisfactions of the latter. Consumption often functions as a compensation for the loss of security, stability, and satisfaction of work, which is not to say that it is not without its own insecurities especially as they are cultivated by advertising.⁴⁷

This generalised proletarianisation remains at the centre of Stiegler's thought, and is central to both his critique of Marx and his development of a 'new critique of political economy'. Stiegler's emphasis on consumption is not without its precursors in Marxist thought: generalised proletarianisation is Stiegler's re-reading of the history of twentieth-century Marxism, starting with Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's work on the culture industry. Stiegler's use of this term is less a linear influence than a shared problem, a

45 Ibid. Stiegler's critique reiterates much of the critique of 'consumer society' and the commodification of daily life as it has been developed by Debord, Lefebvre, and Baudrillard, specifically the idea that the exploitation of 'buying power' is the corollary of the exploitation of labour power that finds its expression in the early works of Baudrillard. Baudrillard, like Stiegler, understands the formation of the consumer to be analogous to the constitution of the proletariat. As Baudrillard writes, 'It is difficult to grasp the extent to which the current training in systematic, organized consumption is the equivalent and extension, in the twentieth century, of the great nineteenth-century long process of the training of rural populations for industrial work' (Baudrillard 1998, p. 81).

46 Stuart Ewen's influential study of the history of consumerism argues that there is a historical connection between the deskilling of work in the Fordist production process and the deskilling of consumption, as the mass-produced goods of an industrial economy no longer allowed for tinkering (Ewen 2001, p. 106).

47 Edward Bernays, Freud's nephew and a pioneer of public relations, is a central figure for Stiegler's understanding of consumerism. Which is why, for Stiegler, consumer society is nothing less than a disindividuation, a loss of the subject into so many drives (Stiegler 2010b, p. 28).

problem grasped in the terminology itself, namely the industrialisation of culture. Stiegler is primarily interested in the political, cultural, and psychic effects of the industrialisation of culture; what happens when culture, understood as the process of transindividuation and its materialisation in various forms of inscription, is subordinated to the techniques and goals of industrial production. Stiegler draws from the Frankfurt School not just in his use of the term, and analysis of, the 'culture industry', but also in his engagement with Herbert Marcuse's reading of Freud in *Mécréance et Discrédit*. Moreover, his entire project could be defined along the lines of Max Horkheimer's inaugural statement of the Institute for Social Research. As Horkheimer states, 'In both sociological and philosophical discussion about society, a single question has begun to stand out: the question of the connection between the economic life of society, the psychic development of the individual and changes in the cultural sphere.'⁴⁸ For Stiegler, the intersection of economy, psyche or individuation, and culture is the question of transindividuation. For Stiegler, the chapter on the 'culture industry' becomes the centre of the Frankfurt School's project, since their central project, that of the dialectic of enlightenment, the reversal of reason into its opposite – the irrationality that defines the twentieth century – is best understood as the subordination of culture to economics.

First, at the level of technology, there is the development of new cultural technologies – film, radio, and eventually television and the Internet. All of these technical transformations, despite their different histories, are part of a general transformation of the nature of tertiary retentions from analogue to digital, a transformation that affects their entire relation with individuation, with the temporality of memory. Written texts are always read in time; this reading is always framed by retentions, memory of past words are necessary to making sense, and protentions, anticipation of what comes next guides and orients the reading. However, the object itself does not programme the time of reading, by its own particular relationship to time. Writing is a spatial object.⁴⁹ In the case of a book, I can put the book down, pick it up, read it quickly or slowly, and even inscribe on the margins. These differentials of intervention, of reading and reinscription, are the conditions of different transindividual individuations, different ways in which the same book is traversed by different individuations, different singularities. They are read differently by different individuals, and even differently by the same individual, constituting a history of individuation. Modern technologies, such as film, television, and streaming

48 Cited in Rolf Wiggershaus 1994, p. 38.

49 Stiegler 2010c, p. 84.

video, function differently: they are not just read or consumed in time, but consume time. Movies, television, and even YouTube videos are themselves temporal, not just in that they can be measured according to their running time, but that they structure time. 'Cinema weaves itself into our time; it becomes the temporal fabric of those ninety or fifty-two minutes of unconscious consciousness that is characteristic of being, a film view, strangely immobilized by motion'.⁵⁰ If we remember Stiegler's fundamental point that what we perceive and anticipate is shaped by past experiences, by secondary and tertiary retentions, then the more an audience experiences the same things, sees the same movies and programmes, the more it will experience future things in the same way.⁵¹ Synchronisation makes possible the programming of consciousness. For Stiegler, the most important passage of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique is their invocation of Kantian schemata:

The active contribution which Kantian schematism still expected of subjects – that they should, from the first, relate sensuous multiplicity to fundamental concepts – is denied to the subject by industry. It purveys schematism as its first service to the customer ... For the consumer there is nothing left to classify, since the classification has already been pre-empted by the schematism of production.⁵²

Stiegler is concerned less with the content of the culture industry, its clichés and figures, than with its fundamental relation with the temporal synthesis, the ability of the new industry to programme consciousness.⁵³ This ability to programme consciousness, to synchronise the memories of millions, is further complicated by the emergence of 'real time' transmission. 'Real time', the immediate transmission (or constitution) of an event to millions of screens, synchronises the thoughts and ideas of millions of individuals. Real time is the destruction of temporality, of the time of difference of the retentions and anticipations, which defines the transindividuation of memory.⁵⁴

Stiegler primarily considers the culture industry through its effects on the temporality of individuation, the constitution of primary, secondary, and tertiary retentions, overlooking the way in which Horkheimer and Adorno develop a fundamentally different critique of the individual. Mass culture, with

⁵⁰ Stiegler 201b, p. 11.

⁵¹ Stiegler 2009, p. 55.

⁵² Horkheimer and Adorno 2007, p. 98.

⁵³ Stiegler 201b, p. 33.

⁵⁴ Stiegler 201b, p. 125.

its emphasis on stock characters and standard responses, reveals the extent to which the individualism of capitalist society is itself a fiction. As Horkheimer and Adorno write,

Mass culture thereby reveals the fictitious quality which has characterized the individual throughout the bourgeois era and is wrong only in priding itself on this murky harmony between universal and particular. The principle of individuality was contradictory from the outset. First no individuation was every really achieved. The class determined form of self-preservation maintained everyone at the level of mere species being. Every bourgeois character expressed the same thing, even and especially when deviating from it: the harshness of competitive society.⁵⁵

Competition, long considered the zenith of individualism by bourgeois philosophers since Hobbes and Smith, is in actuality the nadir of the individual. Individuals compelled to compete to struggle against each other realise nothing but an animalistic instinct for survival, what Horkheimer and Adorno refer to as 'species-being', in a strange shift of Marx's terminology. Individualism is annulled by competition itself. The culture industry merely completes this negation with its idealisation of 'girl next door' looks and everyday people: its ability to turn anyone into a star merely reflects the power of the industry over individual destiny. For Stiegler, the loss of individuation is not to be found in the predominance of stock characters and stereotypes, nor in the way in which economic necessity itself necessarily imposes a particular uniformity of action – competition as a deindividualised atomism – but in the synchronisation of consciousness that destroys the basis for individuation.

Stiegler's emphasis is on the technological transformation, but such transformations have to be situated against the political and economic transformations of the last century. Stiegler identifies two recent shifts in the history of this politics of grammatisation. The first is situated against the backdrop of the general political problem of adoption. The preponderance of tertiary retentions, of grammatisations, means that human beings are fundamentally 'adoptive' creatures, adopting memories and cultures that have been inherited. Adoption, however, presupposes literacy, a capacity to interpret and make sense of the signs and memories that have been handed down. Stiegler argues that the United States was in a unique political and historical situation at the dawn of the previous century: it had to deal with the influx of a mass of immigrants and

55 Horkheimer and Adorno 2007, p. 125.

peoples who did not share the same culture, or the same capacity for making sense of cultural inheritance. It was partly for these reasons that the US became identified with cinema, with Hollywood. Hollywood is nothing other than the attempt to fabricate a shared memory and a shared sense of belonging for disparate people.⁵⁶

The United States created the image of modernity through Chaplin, *Gone with the Wind*, and Mickey just as much as through high technology and Wall Street skyscrapers. American history is the history of appropriation of mnemotechnology and the mastery of industrial systems of retention, but just as much of technologies of the imaginary, and of calculation and logistics. And it is also, more recently, that of the long industrial, systematic, and rationalized organization of their convergence into a singular technical system, integrally digital. This politics of technology is indissociable from the politics of adoption, which is then the basis for a politics of invention and artistic creation.⁵⁷

While this defines the initial identification of the movies with Hollywood, Stiegler argues that the real political dimension of this third wave of grammatisation, following writing and the industrial revolution, is found in the decision of the US to control 'hearts and minds', the recognition that the control over the radio waves and bandwidths was as integral to political power in the twentieth century as control over the seas was to the nineteenth century.⁵⁸

56 Stiegler 2011b, p. 105. Stiegler perhaps overstates the role of the US in this use of cinema. Stiegler does acknowledge the role of Russian thinkers in the formation of early concepts of montage, paying special attention to the 'Kuleshov Effect' as a demonstration of the shaping of primary retentions, experience, by memory (Stiegler 2011b, p. 15). The idea of constructing a memory, and engineering the attention and psyche, was also a part of Soviet cinema. As Sergei Eisenstein wrote, 'In our conception a work of art is first and foremost a tractor ploughing over the audience's psyche in a particular class context' (Eisenstein 1988, p. 62). Susan Buck-Morss has argued that Hollywood and Soviet Cinema constitute two different constructions of mass consciousness: one focused on the star as a mass object, the other on the masses as a subject. As Buck-Morss writes, 'If the Soviet screen provided a prosthetic experience of collective power, the Hollywood screen provided a prosthetic experience of collective desire' (Buck-Morss 2000, p. 148). In contrast to this, Jonathan Beller has argued that far from constituting two radically different projects, American cinema has incorporated Eisenstein's concept of montage in order to produce an economics and politics of attention (Beller 2006, p. 119).

57 Stiegler 2011, p. 117.

58 Stiegler 2011, p. 127. Stiegler's rough periodisation of grammatisation in terms of three

The rise of the consumer as a figure for disindividuation, for the dissolution of the conditions for transindividuation, underscores the fact that as much as the rise of the new technologies of grammatisation could be identified with the politics of Americanisation, both internally, defining a politics of adoption for a nation of disparate ethnicities and languages, and externally, in terms of the global dominance of the American way of life, they exceed it. Stiegler argues that the technologies of the culture industry, or what he calls hypercapitalism, which shape memory and experience, far exceed any political project. A political project, whether it be one of the citizen or the 'American Century', is always aimed at the constitution of a 'we', a collective, whereas capitalism, or the market, is driven by other imperatives, imperatives that are at odds with political transindividuation.⁵⁹ These imperatives can be grasped through Marx's theory of capital, as much as they point to its basic limitations. Capitalism in the twentieth century has been confronted with the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, a tendency that, as Marx argued, had to do with the changes in the composition of capital from labour to machines.⁶⁰ This change in the organic composition of capital, the displacement of labour power by machines and technology, decreases the rate of exploitation and profit. Labour becomes more productive, producing more use values in a given amount of time, but this overall productivity appears as a decrease of the rate of surplus value, labour power, variable capital, and constitutes less and less of the production process. The rate of profit declines as the overall volume of profit increases. This tendency not only demonstrates how capital constitutes 'the moving contradiction' undoing its basis in the exploitation of labour power, but it also ultimately undermines the viability of capital, as lower rates of profit undermine the very idea of investing to receive a return on capital. What Marx did not grasp, according to Stiegler, is how this tendency could be counteracted by the expansion of consumption, which maintains profit by

epochs, the first defined by the long period of the citizen predicated on the extension of writing, the second by the industrial revolution, and the third on hypermateriality roughly models the periodisation which Maurizio Lazzarato adopts from Michel Foucault. This periodisation is divided between the epoch of sovereignty, focused on state power to subtract or destroy; the epoch of discipline, focused on the spatial control of bodies; and the epoch of control, focused on action at a distance on a dispersed public. Like Stiegler, Lazzarato gives central importance to the technological elements of this transition, identifying control with technologies such as newspapers, radio, and television that act directly on memory and minds (Lazzarato 2004, p. 85).

59 Stiegler 2010c, p. 129.

60 Marx 1981, p. 319.

expanding markets and forestalls crisis by integrating desires into consumption.

The proletarianization of consumers is what made it possible – by opening up mass markets enabling resistance against the tendential fall of the rate of profit – to confer buying power upon consumers, to accord them more than simply the renewal of their labour power, and to fundamentally and practically weaken the Marxist theory of class struggle.⁶¹

In the nineteenth century, capitalism confronts the limits of its own productivity. Investments in technology and machinery make it possible to produce more goods than can be realised to the market. Add to this a shrinking working class as technology displaces workers, and capitalism is confronted with a crisis. Despite Stiegler's use of the terminology of the 'rate of profit' to express this crisis, its central constituent dimensions, overproduction and unemployment, are more akin to what Marx called the problem of 'realisation', as the vast number of commodities produced exceeds the limited buying power of a dwindling working class.⁶² Overproduction is a problem of excess, not of capital, of money that cannot be productively invested, but of commodities. Moreover, Stiegler's emphasis on overproduction as the central contradiction can be traced back to Hegel's understanding of the contradiction of civil society, which was also a crisis of overproduction. Like Hegel, Stiegler is primarily concerned with the subjective dimension of this crisis; its effects and solution must be found on the side of the constitution of subjectivity; unlike Hegel, however, Stiegler argues that the solution to this crisis was not to be found through the state, either through the displacement of contradictions to the colonies or through the constitution of a universal subjectivity, but through capitalism itself. Capitalism solves overproduction by transforming consumption. Proletarianisation in the expanded sense becomes the solution to proletarianisation in the narrow sense: the proletarianisation of the labour process is resolved by the proletarianisation of daily life through consumption. Stiegler's 'proletariat' (although

61 Stiegler 2010b, p. 40.

62 Marx 1981, p. 352. Stiegler's discussions of the 'rate of profit' are generally framed in terms of the crisis of overproduction. However, he also uses the same concept from Marx to make sense of 'financialisation'. The decrease of the rate of profit undermines any long-term investment in factories, tools, and machinery. In its place we find an emphasis on short-term investment, on investment oriented towards speculation and fictive capital (Stiegler 2010a, p. 159). For Stiegler, both consumption and financial speculation are defined by an emphasis on the short-term, on immediate realisation and profit.

he writes of the process, not the class) is not a class with nothing to lose but its chains, rather it is a class that has always already lost its fundamental knowledge, activity, and individuation. The reconciliation of one contradiction, that of overproduction through the consumer, only displaces it, as consumption short-circuits the very conditions for individuation.⁶³ The consumer resolves the problem of overconsumption by quickly and obsessively adopting new technologies, new needs, new objects, but in doing so it produces a crisis of subjectivity, a breakdown of individuation and responsibility that is incapable of constituting itself in relation to a future. For Stiegler, it is consumer society that creates the rabble.

Ultimately, Stiegler's central concern is not the relation between consumption and production, or the economics of this transformation, but the way in which the individuation, or disindividuation, of the consumer breaks with the transindividuation of the citizen. The citizen as a transindividual individuation was situated not only in terms of the particular grammatisation of writing in the form of laws, narratives, and texts, but also in terms of the particular temporality, the particular memory, they produced. This temporality is framed between the specific instantiation of the law, its determinate meaning and interpretation, and a broader horizon, the destiny of the nation, between the materiality of the letter and the ideality of the spirit. Transindividual individuation is situated between a past, materialised in texts, tools, and signs, and a future, idealised as a projection of the future. Consumption and marketing fundamentally short-circuit this relation between historical memory and desire for the future.⁶⁴ Marketing is concerned neither with the retention of historical memory nor the projection of a future; in fact it actively destroys both, producing a constant now, a constant novelty without history. In contrast to the citizen, caught between the inheritance of a law and the ideal of justice, the consumer is caught in the perpetual present of *this* product, *this* programme, *this* need, or *this* drive.⁶⁵ Moreover, the standardisation of memory makes the individuation, the constitution of an 'I', fundamentally difficult. If the citizen is caught in the struggle between 'I' and 'We', finding its place and its individuality in the tension between the two, and the proletariat is a loss of individuation, then the consumer is more akin to the proletariat, situated in an expanding loss of the conditions for individuation.⁶⁶ The loss of knowledge, of a knowledge that can be practiced, is the loss of individuation.

63 Stiegler 2010a, p. 139.

64 Stiegler 2006c, p. 124.

65 Stiegler 2010b, p. 83.

66 Stiegler 2008b, p. 45.

Consumption destroys singularisation, the unique combination of primary and secondary retentions that defines and distinguishes my experience and interpretation; it replaces singularity with synchronisation. It also destroys the capacity to act. Stiegler's history of the different forms of grammatisation, of tertiary retentions, is not just a history that charts the transformation from diachrony, as every new reading is caught between a past and a future, to synchrony, through the production of temporal objects, but is also a history that moves from activity to passivity. As Stiegler stresses repeatedly, to learn to read is to learn to write; the same exchangeability from passivity to activity defines the history of such aesthetic practices as music and art, where learning to passively receive was always a matter of learning to produce, to create.⁶⁷ This reversibility is broken, short-circuited, by the technologies of the culture industry for which consumption, passivity, is separated from production, activity. Watching movies or television, listening to music, is no longer premised on the ability to create, or produce new movies, music, etc. A reader necessarily writes, even if this writing only takes the form of inscriptions and notations, but a viewer of films does not necessarily know how to create films, nor does a listener of recorded music make music. Loss of knowledge is a loss of participation. The destruction of singularisation and loss of participation are two aspects of the contemporary destruction of individuation.

All of these factors – the temporal foreshortening of past and future into an eternal present, the loss of knowledge – culminate in the loss of transindividuation itself. Consumption does not constitute a collective, a 'we', nor does it constitute individuation, an 'I'. The first might be easy to grasp; after all, despite brand loyalties it is difficult to think of consumption constituting a collective in any meaningful sense of the word. The groups of people who buy the same thing, wear the same brands, are not a 'we', but a statistical multiplicity, a 'billions served'. The second is perhaps more difficult to grasp; are we not in an age that is increasingly described as individualistic, as dominated by competitive self-interest? Stiegler contests this:

To say we live in an individualistic society is a patent lie, an extraordinary false delusion, and, moreover, extraordinary because no one seems conscious of it, as if the efficacy of the lie was proportional to its enormity, and as if the lie was nobody's responsibility. We live in a herd-society, as comprehended and anticipated by Nietzsche. Some think this society individualistic because, at the very highest levels of public and private

67 Stiegler 2005, p. 72.

responsibility, but also in the smallest details of those processes of adoption stamped by marketing and the organization of consumption, egotism has been elevated to the pinnacle of life. But individualism has no relation to this egotism. Individualism wants the flourishing of the individual, the being always and indissociably a we and I, an I in a we or a we composed of *Is*, incarnated by *Is*. To oppose the individual and the collective is to transform individuation into social atomization, producing a herd.⁶⁸

Stiegler is thus closer to Horkheimer and Adorno than it first appeared; modern society is not an individualistic society, but a herd society. However, this 'herd' is not the remnant of brutal animalist survival and species identity in competition, but the end result of the destruction of the conditions of individuation. The conventional opposition between individual and collective completely obscures the real processes of individuation, and their destruction in the age of contemporary consumer capitalism, what Stiegler calls hyperindustrial capitalism.⁶⁹ It obscures the synchronisation of isolated consciousness tuned to the same programmes and affixed to the same screens. These audiences are not collectives, they are not the basis for a 'We', but are hyper masses, collectives that exist only in relation to their statistical enumeration.⁷⁰ A consumer society is only made up of 'they', of others that exist only as simple numbers of quantitative comparison. Even less are these audiences made up of individuals, since individuals require a 'We', a collective in relation to which they can individuate themselves, even if this relation is one of opposition and transgression, as in the case of citizens who insist on new interpretations of old laws. Individuation is framed by the non-identity of memory and history. The synchronisation of memory and experience, a synchronisation that has as its central goal marketing, the creation of new needs and desires, destroys the temporal basis for singularisation, the constitution of new individuations.⁷¹ Consumption des-

68 Stiegler 2009, p. 48.

69 Stiegler 2008b, p. 37.

70 Stiegler 2008d, p. 83.

71 Leroi-Gourhan predicted a demise of the arts with the rise of these tertiary retentions. "Ten generations from now a writer selected to produce social fiction will probably be sent on a "renaturation" course in a park a corner of which he or she will have to till a plough copied from a museum exhibit and pulled by a horse borrowed from a zoo. He or she will cook and eat the family meal at the family table, organize neighborhood visits, enact a wedding, sell cabbages from a market stall ... and learn anew how to relate the ancient writings of Gustave Flaubert to the meagerly reconstituted reality, after which this person will no doubt be capable of submitting a batch of freshened up emotions to the broadcasting

troys the temporal and subjective basis for politics, for any politics other than the combination of marketing and repressive control.

Stiegler's juxtaposition of the citizen and the consumer as two fundamentally different transindividual individuations brings to the foreground the question of the relationship between transindividuation and knowledge. The history of the citizen as a transindividual individuation is primarily framed in terms of various legal and political institutions that secure its standing in society, its rights, but what often passes unnoticed is that these rights depend on, and presuppose, a literacy and relation of knowledge that are their basis. Citizenship is as much an individuation of a regime of knowledge, of attention and desire, as it is an individuation secured by laws and institutions. As we have seen, Stiegler makes this point by examining the history of transindividuation, focusing on the history of grammatisation as the technological milieu that defines the conditions for individuation. Balibar arrives at a similar conclusion by examining the connection between individuality and property. As Balibar argues, the citizen was a figure of 'possessive individualism', whose self-possession was not only recognised by others, but also formed the condition for power and social standing.⁷² If this is the case, then anything that transforms the fundamental articulation of self-possession, specifically the basic constitution of knowledge necessary for social existence, fundamentally alters the constitution of political subjectivity. As Balibar writes,

This process of autonomization-intellectualization-materialization of 'knowledge' determines more and more the exercise of the 'property rights' and thereby individuality. But at the same time it renders more and more uncertain the identity of proprietors, the identity of the 'subject' of property. Then we are no longer dealing merely with a mechanism of division of human nature that practically contradicts the requirement of freedom and equality. Instead we are dealing with a dissolution of political individuality.⁷³

Balibar and Stiegler arrive at the same point, namely that as much as it is possible to identify the citizen as a transindividual individuation, constituting the ideal of equaliberty or recognition of I and we, this individuation has been fundamentally altered by transformations in the economy, which are also trans-

authorities' (Leroi-Gourhan 1993, p. 361).

72 Balibar 2010, p. 103.

73 Balibar 1994a, p. 58.

formations of the fundamental conditions for individuation. They arrive at this point, however, through radically different means. Stiegler arrives at this point by stressing the role of grammatisation and its transformation in the genesis and loss of citizen. Balibar develops a fundamentally different history of the citizen, focusing on the shifts of political anthropology from the prehistory of the citizen to its contemporary undoing in the transformations of work and knowledge. More importantly, Balibar's history, despite its pretensions to epochal divisions, is not neatly divided between these transformations: anthropological difference continues in various forms of racism and nationalism even in later forms of individuation that call into question the unity of citizen. As Balibar writes,

Let us nonetheless note here that, if these epochs succeed upon one another, or engender one another, they do not supplant one another like the scenes of a play: for us, and consequently in our relation to the political question, they are all still present in a disunified totality, in a noncontemporaneity that is the very structure of the 'current moment', which means that we are simultaneously dealing with the state, with the class struggle, and with anthropological difference.⁷⁴

We will return to this 'disunified totality' in Chapter 4, especially as it makes it possible to think together the various histories of transindividuation, anthropological, affective, and grammatisation, and their intersection with politics and political economy.

Reading Balibar alongside Stiegler thus raises the question of the incomplete and uneven progression of the various transformations of transindividuation. Stiegler's writing frames this transformation in terms of shifts that are either epochal, the long era of writing, the industrial revolution, and the rise of the culture industry, or generational, in which the modern generation is defined by a fundamental break in the historical process of socialisation and grammatisation.⁷⁵ In contrast to this, Balibar's different epochs of political anthropology – the era of anthropological difference, the era of the citizen, and the post-universal anthropology – are defined in terms of their mutual intersection. The ancient divisions, divisions of humanity in terms of distinct races, resurface in the face of the modern productions of universality. The incomplete transformation is tied to the matrix of their transindividuation, which is, at its core,

⁷⁴ Balibar 1994a, p. 59.

⁷⁵ Stiegler 2010c, p. 4.

based on the fundamental political transformation of social relations. As much as this matrix changes, it is still subject to the same intersection of imagination and determination. In contrast to this, Stiegler's history is primarily indexed to the intersection between the various technologies of grammatisation and their effects on transindividuality. This history is punctuated by transformations at the level of technology that are unequivocal and irreversible.

Ultimately the difference between Stiegler and Balibar is one of their respective materialisms. For Stiegler, matter refers to the matter of the letter, the various forms of material inscription and dissemination; it is this that remains determinate despite the reference to political economy. Balibar's materialism is ultimately not only Marxist, focusing on the relations of production as the fundamental condition of individuation, but also equally indebted to Althusser by positing citizenship, nation, and race to be the effects of so many multiple practices (legal, educational, and cultural).⁷⁶ The multiple and conflicting practices (legal, political, economic, and technological) constitute a differential temporality, and a relation of necessary displacement in which the effects of one practice are constantly transformed by and determining the effects on others. Thus, even though Balibar is less directly influenced by Simondon, his articulation on the multiple names of politics, on the other scene of political and economic individuation, is closer to Simondon's concern of reducing social relations to one individuation.

For Stiegler, the intersection of transindividuality and political economy, or capital, is framed primarily through consumption, through the rise of the consumer as not so much a figure of transindividuation, but as a short-circuit of the very conditions of transindividuation. As much as it is possible to follow his argument that consumption emerges as a new reality, destroying the long circuits of individuation that constituted the citizen, consumption is not the entirety of political economy. As we saw in the first chapter, Marx argued that the sphere of exchange, which produced its own individuation predicated on 'freedom, equality, and Bentham', was only part of economic reality, despite being taken for the entirety of it. Marx understood this subject, the ego of self-interest, to have a fundamentally contradictory relationship to the citizen, to use that name of collective individuation: affirming its individuation and separation, but negating its universality. While Stiegler's theory of consumption can be understood as a radicalisation of Marx's thesis following the transformation of commodification, marketing, and technology in contemporary capitalism, it is not the entirety of capital. There is also the hidden abode

76 Balibar 2004, p. 26.

of production, which produces and is produced by a fundamentally different transindividual individuation. Since much of Stiegler's understanding of consumption is situated against the backdrop of the economic and technological changes of the last century, the rise of the technologies of the culture industry and consumerism as methods of extending and maintaining markets, we could ask the question as to what remains of 'the hidden abode of production' in these transformations.

Transindividuality and the Production of the Social Individual: Paolo Virno

Paolo Virno's engagement with transindividuality is, like Stiegler's, situated between the general problem of human nature, the anthropogenesis or formation of human subjectivity, and the current conjuncture of contemporary capitalism. It too is framed between the eternal, the invariant conditions of human existence, and the contemporary, the transformation of capital in post-Fordist production. Unlike Stiegler, however, these economic changes are framed less in terms of consumption, and the rise of a consumer society oriented towards its subjective formation through the cultural sphere, than in terms of a fundamental change in production. This change is usually characterised as a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism. The introduction of these terms introduces a variety of problems and questions as to their specific definition, scope, and sense, but we can take as our starting point a rather generic definition shared by many analyses, since Virno relies on them for a starting point. Fordism generally designates a particular regime of production, defined by mechanised and specialised tasks on an assembly line, coupled with a particular regime of production, the creation of the producer as consumer, higher productivity and worker consumption. For Virno, one of the defining characteristics of Fordism, the concept of which more or less functions as the backdrop of his specific analyses into post-Fordism, is, as with Lordon, the relative stability of employment and uniformity of work. Work functioned as an activity that provided stability and security, defined a world. Virno, like Lordon, recognises a fundamental affective dimension to this as well, framed less in terms of the relation between hope and fear, as in Lordon's account of the economy of affects, than in the breakdown of the distinction between fear and anguish. Fear is fear of some discernible thing within a world, while anguish is the loss of the world.⁷⁷ The world

77 Virno 2004, p. 32.

of Fordism is a world of discernible fears, but as its stability gives way to insecurity, the specific fears are tinged with anguish, as fear of losing a job becomes tinged with the dread of losing a world constituted by the repetition and regularity of work. The affective distinction between fear and anguish, its particular affective composition of labour, according to Virno, reveals something of the role of work and labour in his thought. As we will discuss in the following section, Virno shares Stiegler's general view that defines humans as lacking a particular instinctual determination (although his source is not the palaeontology of Leroi-Gourhan but instead the work of such philosophical anthropologists as Arnold Gehlen).⁷⁸ Work then, the stability of routines, habits, and rules, constitutes a kind of second nature, defining and delimiting a world.⁷⁹ The second defining characteristic of Fordism is its silence, or its lack of communication: ideas, orders, and conceptions moved in one direction, from design to execution, and from production to consumption. Ford's often cited statement that one can have 'a model-T in any colour, so long as it's black', reflects not just the mass standardisation of production but also the poverty of communication between consumption and production. In contrast to this, the Toyota model, which can be considered a kind of intermediary between Fordism and post-Fordism, introduces communication through the entire productive process, in terms of total quality management, in which employees are encouraged to communicate their observations, and in terms of information gathered at the point of consumption.⁸⁰ Stability, instrumentality, and silence, or lack of communication, are so integral to the definition of the Fordist labour process that for Virno they define work itself.⁸¹ For Virno, the defining characteristic of the 'hidden abode of production', at least in its Fordist phase, is not so much its asymmetry of force or its different individuation, but rather its silence. The sign that hangs over its entrance is not 'No Admittance Except on Business', but 'Silence, Men at Work' – at least until the end of Fordism.

These definitions of Fordism, like Marx's descriptions of pre-capitalist economic formations, function in Virno's work only to underscore the profound transformation of post-Fordism; they are the sketches of the background against which the major concepts are drawn. Virno derives his positive description of post-Fordism from the notebooks in Marx's *Grundrisse* that have been posthumously retitled 'The Fragment on Machines'. In this text Marx argues

78 Virno 2009b, p. 137.

79 Gehlen 1980, p. 13.

80 Marazzi 2008, p. 41.

81 Virno 2004, p. 91.

that capital, in the transformation of the organic composition, a transformation that shifts productive activity towards machines, makes the general social knowledge, what he calls 'the general intellect', the primary productive force. As Marx writes,

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are the products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge objectified [*vergegenständlichte Wissenskraft*]. The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it.⁸²

For Marx, the development of this general intellect takes the form of machinery, scientific knowledge, and technology. Thus, in the same notebook, Marx describes a fundamental transformation in the status of labour power; it ceases to be the motive, or even directive force, of the productive process, to become merely a conscious organ; 'it relates more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself'.⁸³ Marx's fragmentary analysis in the notebook envisions a future in which capital, as 'the moving contradiction', undoes its own basis, undoing labour as the measure of wealth. The status of this concept of the general intellect, its more or less fragmentary, or even orphaned, place in Marx's writing, as a word or concept more mentioned than developed, has opened the door to multiple attempts to develop its content, filling in either the philosophy that Marx excluded, or the history that he could not envision.⁸⁴

82 Marx 1973, p. 706. This is the most well-known use of the term in Marx. Its second appearance in Marx's writing, in an article written for *The New York Daily Tribune* in October of 1861, is less enthusiastic about its radical potential, stressing instead its fundamental fragmentation in capitalist society. As Marx writes in that article, 'the progressive division of labor has, to a certain extent, emasculated the general intellect of the middle-class men by the circumscription of all their energies and mental faculties within the narrow spheres of their mercantile, industrial and professional concerns' (Marx 1861).

83 Marx 1973, p. 705.

84 Giorgio Agamben has developed this dimension of the 'general intellect', creating an alternate genealogy that runs through Aristotle, Averroes, and Dante. As Agamben writes, 'modern political philosophy does not begin with classical thought, which had made

Virno offers two correctives to Marx's projection, changing it from a prediction of the demise of capitalism to a description of post-Fordism. First, Virno argues that much of what Marx has described has come to pass, knowledge has become a dominant productive force, transforming capitalism, but this has not led to an emancipatory reversal.⁸⁵ There has been no reduction of working time, or liberation from wage labour. 'Labour time is the unit of measurement in use, but no longer the true unit of measurement'.⁸⁶ Second, what Marx failed to grasp, or predict, was the extent to which 'the general intellect manifests itself as living labour'.⁸⁷ The general knowledge of society is manifest not just in machines, technology from the locomotive to the Internet, but also in living labour, in the diffused knowledge of workers that interact not just with technology, but also with increasingly complex social relations. Virno's correction of Marx encounters the same question of the relation of technology and social relations as Simondon, as much as technology, specifically the machinery of mass industry, forms the basis for thinking about transindividuality, it cannot be reduced to it. It is necessary to also consider the transindividual character of general social knowledge.⁸⁸ Virno insists on a point that will be crucial to his understanding of transindividuality and anthropogenesis, that this knowledge is not the specialised knowledge of scientists, engineers, and web designers, but knowledge as a generic capacity. 'The general intellect is nothing but the intellect in general'.⁸⁹ This is in part due to the fact that this knowledge concerns the most fundamental capacities of human existence, such as language and the capacity to learn, but it is also due to the instability and precariousness of the labour project. As individuals are shifted from job to job, intellect is defined more and more as the capacity to learn new tasks, new protocols and programmes, rather than a set body of knowledge. This can be seen in the increased emphasis in job training literature on professionalism rather than specialisation. As Virno writes,

of contemplation, of the bio theoreticos, a separate and solitary activity ("exile of the alone to the alone"), but rather only with Averroism, that is, with the thought of the one and only possible intellect common to all human beings, and, crucially, with Dante's affirmation – in *De Monarchia* – of the inherence of the multitude to the very power of thought' (Agamben 2000, p. 10).

85 Virno 2004, p. 100.

86 Virno 2004, p. 101.

87 Virno 2007a, p. 5.

88 Virno 2006, p. 37.

89 Virno 2004, p. 66.

Specialization is something impersonal, an objective requirement that can be evaluated based on shared parameters. Professionalism on the other hand is seen as a subjective property, a form of know-how inseparable from the individual person; it is a sum of knowledges, experiences, attitudes, and a certain sensibility. Correctly understood, post-Fordist 'professionalism' does not correspond to any precise profession. It consists rather of certain character traits.⁹⁰

Professionalism is ultimately a manifestation of one's generic capacity to act and relate in the world. While Fordism stressed stability, fixing people to machines and their place in the productive process, post-Fordism stresses the capacity to develop new traits. Thus, moving from the limits and possibilities of Marx's text to a general definition, post-Fordism is understood to be a transformation of both the stability of work, the repetition and habit that constituted its world, and the integration of communication, knowledge, and social relations into the productive process.

The effects of this transformation are not just limited to insecurity and instability. The entry of the general intellect into the production process transforms the basis of the 'real abstraction'. The term 'real abstraction' is framed between Marx's *Grundrisse* and Alfred Sohn-Rethel's *Intellectual and Manual Labour*. In the former, Marx argues that the concept of labour, as an abstract general idea, is a practical and effective reality only at a given historical juncture, and due to historical transformations.⁹¹ Labour, labour indifferent to its activity and object, becomes a reality only with the development of capitalism, and the technology and social relations that make it flexible and indifferent. While Marx introduced the idea of abstraction becoming a historical and practical reality, Sohn-Rethel developed and deepened this idea, turning not to labour, and abstract labour, but instead focusing on exchange to develop the reality of abstraction. For Sohn-Rethel, the true scandal of Marx's thought, at least in terms of philosophy, is in positing an abstraction that has practice rather than thought as its origin and genesis. The abstraction of exchange value takes place in the practice of the exchange of commodities, not in the consciousness of the actors.⁹² Commodity exchange, and with it the whole sphere of value, presupposes an abstraction that is lived more than it is comprehended. Sohn-Rethel's primary emphasis here is on the practical, which is to say

⁹⁰ Virno 2007b, p. 44.

⁹¹ Marx 1973, p. 105.

⁹² Sohn-Rethel 1978, p. 30.

material, basis of this abstraction, but it is equally possible to say that this abstraction is transindividual. This could constitute a second scandal, one that confronts not the mental nature of abstraction but rather its solitary nature. As Sohn-Rethel writes, 'Nothing that a single commodity-owner might undertake on his own could give rise to this abstraction, no more than a hammock could play its part when attached to one pole only'.⁹³ Virno draws ambiguously from both of these sources to argue for a historicisation of the real abstraction. The distinction is loosely framed on the distinction between Fordism and post-Fordism, between the productivity of labour as abstract and interchangeable, and the productivity of a general social knowledge. This distinction is framed in terms of two different dominant real abstractions, the first, money and the commodity form, abstractions of equivalence, while the second phase of real abstraction is marked by the general intellect. As Virno writes,

Whereas money, the 'universal equivalent' itself, incarnates in its independent existence the commensurability of products, jobs, and subjects, the general intellect instead stabilizes the analytic premises of every type of practice. Models of social knowledge do not equate the various activities of labour, but rather present themselves as the 'immediate forces of production'.⁹⁴

The transformation of the real abstraction is a transformation of the production process, but is not limited to it, extending beyond it to encompass social relations. The real abstractions of Fordism, money and the labour form, stressed equivalence, rendering different types of work interchangeable. It is from this equivalent that the 'sphere of exchange' derives its particular liberatory image, the idea of 'freedom, equality, and Bentham'. Virno argues, echoing some of the themes of *The Communist Manifesto*, that this equivalent has an inescapable liberatory dimension, an equivalent that tears 'asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors"'.⁹⁵ Virno follows what is arguably the most celebratory of Marx's texts in claiming this equivalence, the fact that the different labours of different individuals, regardless of race, gender, or age, are all part of abstract labour. To risk a rough parallel with Balibar, for Virno it is the figure of the generic worker and not the citizen that offers an egalitarian prehistory of the present.⁹⁶ Understanding this entails turning to a particular aside of

93 Sohn-Rethel 1978, p. 69.

94 Virno 1996a, p. 22.

95 Marx and Engels 1978, p. 475.

96 Virno 1996a, p. 24.

Marx. In the passage on 'commodity fetishism', Marx draws a parallel between a society of commodity producers predicated on abstract labour and forms of Christianity such as deism that extol 'man in the abstract'.⁹⁷ Whereas we previously explored Marx's argument that this ideal of isolated humanity is itself a kind of fetish, a fragmentation and effacement of existing social relations, Virno makes a claim for the egalitarian dimension to this abstraction. Capital is on some level indifferent to the categories and definitions that would separate different individuals and their labour. The real abstractions of the wage, commodity, and abstract labour conceal exploitation but espouse equivalence. The change of the general equivalent is then a change of the general set of values and norms underlying capitalism. Whereas the real abstractions of Fordism posited an equivalence between different individuals, the real abstractions of post-Fordism, of the general intellect, stress the incommensurability of different forms of knowledge. The abstraction of equivalence is replaced by the radical difference between different productive protocols. The shift from one real abstraction to another is also a shift in values and ideals.

For Virno, post-Fordist labour and the general intellect directly engage and put to work the transindividual dimensions of existence.⁹⁸ Making sense of this claim involves unpacking the specific modality of transindividuality in Virno's thought. In the *Grundrisse*, in the same notebooks that detail the general intellect, Marx also coins the term 'social individual' as the cornerstone of wealth, produced not only in the workshop, or formal education, but in free time as well.⁹⁹ To some extent, the very appearance of this phrase begins to suggest that Virno's second correction is not entirely alien from Marx's thought; there is already in the notebooks at least a nascent idea of the general intellect as living labour, as a productive activity.¹⁰⁰ However, the appearance of the formulation in the same notebooks as Marx's depiction of knowledge as a productive force makes it possible to see both of these phenomena as connected. For Marx, this connection is to be found in the most advanced period of capitalism that he knows, that of the emerging factory, while for Virno they are best understood to anticipate post-Fordism. Virno says little about the role of transindividuality in co-operation and the labour process in Marx's analysis of capital, focusing on the shift to post-Fordism. More importantly, this formulation of an individual that is simultaneously 'individual' and 'social' makes it possible to connect Marx's thought with Simondon's ontology. As

97 Marx 1977, p. 172.

98 Virno 2003, p. 1.

99 Marx 1973, p. 705.

100 Read 2003, p. 121.

Virno writes, defining one by means of the other, 'Social should be translated as pre-individual, and "individual" should be seen as the ultimate result of the process of individuation'.¹⁰¹

Virno's translation of Marx's terms into Simondon's underscores the specific way in which he is making sense of the latter's ontology. Virno argues that the pre-individual basis of individuation is made up of three components – sensation and habits, language, and the relations of production.¹⁰² The first of these is identified as natural, the second historico-natural, and the last, the relations of production, is historical. Thus it is possible to understand Virno as dividing the pre-individual between its natural and historical components, splitting the difference between Simondon's formulation and Stiegler's interpretation.¹⁰³ Of all these terms, the historico-natural is perhaps the most in need of clarification, especially since it becomes increasingly central to Virno's philosophical anthropology. Language is historico-natural in that it is both the product of a natural capacity (mouth, lips, tongue, brain), but this capacity can only take its formation as a given historical actualisation, as much as nature describes the capacity for language, any given language is the product of history.¹⁰⁴ Virno differentiates these component elements of the pre-individual, situating some with nature and others with history, in order to unravel some of the knot that ties nature and culture, materiality and spirit. However, Virno maintains two of Simondon's fundamental theses: first, that individuality is never concluded, never finished, it is a process of individuation; and second, that the collective is not the suppression of individuation, but a constitutive element of this process.¹⁰⁵ This collective in which individuals continue the process of individuation, is itself an organisation of the pre-individual, as the capacity for language becomes a particular language, and the biological possibility of habits are organised in determinate habits and relations. As Virno writes, 'The collective is the sphere in which the pre-individual becomes the transindividual'.¹⁰⁶ Most importantly, Virno utilises Simondon to make a central point about contemporary production and subjectivity, overcoming certain conceptual oppositions between the individual and the collective. To argue that with the general intellect the generic capacities of intelligence, knowledge, and communication come into the centre of

¹⁰¹ Virno 2004, p. 80.

¹⁰² Virno 2004, p. 76.

¹⁰³ Toscano 2007, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Virno 2008, p. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Virno 2004, p. 79.

¹⁰⁶ Virno 2009a, p. 65.

the production process is not to argue that human beings, individuals, become interchangeable pseudopods of this generic capacity. What comes to the fore in the contemporary productive process is neither some indifferent generic capacity nor some highly individualised performance, but both at once: it is the transindividual individuation, the intersection between the singular and the common. For Virno, this intersection of singular and common proceeds almost unproblematically, eschewing the tension and even anxiety that characterises Simondon's understanding of the link between collective and individual individuation.

Virno shares the same fundamental thesis as Stiegler that contemporary capitalism intersects with the fundamental aspects of individuation and subjectivity in an unprecedented way. For both Stiegler and Virno, what we are dealing with now is the immediate intersection of political economy and anthropogenesis. For Stiegler, this intersection is framed through the tertiary retentions, memories, inscribed in signs, tools, and stories that define humanity. As consumer capitalism turned towards these inscriptions, commodifying them through the culture industry, it commodified the defining characteristic of humanity, the inheritance of transindividual individuations. Both Stiegler and Virno understand humanity to be defined by a particular lack of instinctual determination, but while Stiegler stresses the creation and inheritance of a specifically human memory of grammatisation, defined by tools and traces, Virno, drawing from Gehlen, argues more forcefully for this indetermination being the defining characteristic of humanity.¹⁰⁷ 'In terms of morphology, man is, in contrast to all other higher mammals, primarily characterized by deficiencies, which, in an exact, biological sense, qualify as lack of adaptation, lack of specialization, primitive states, and failure to develop, and which are essentially negative features'.¹⁰⁸ Human beings lack specialisation, the instincts and aptitudes that define the animal kingdom, and in their place have a drawn out, perhaps even lifelong, practice of learning and forming habits. This lack of determination, the openness to the world, can also be understood as the pre-individual basis for individuation.¹⁰⁹ Humankind's nature, the capacity for language and habits, does not constitute a basis for an individual or collective identity, only the potential for different individuations. The deficiency of instinctual determination is the potential for new habits and languages, for individuation of collectives and groups.

¹⁰⁷ Virno 2003, p. 20.

¹⁰⁸ Gehlen 1998, p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ Virno 2009b, p. 136.

This lack of specialisation, of individuation, is the condition for all history, which is why Virno describes language, habits, and fashion as historico-natural: they are natural in that each depends on natural capacities and deficiencies, the biological capacity for language or the deficiencies of instinct that make habits possible, and are historical in that the specific nature of this language or that cultural habit can only be defined by their history.¹¹⁰ This is true of all history, every specific language, cultural habit, and fashion is a specific actualisation of these potentials, a particular compensation for these deficiencies. What defines the present mode of production, however, is that it is not just an actualisation of this potential, but the potential itself becoming productive. 'Human nature returns to the centre of attention not because we are finally dealing with biology rather than history, but because the biological prerogatives of the human animal have acquired undeniable historical relevance in the contemporary productive process'.¹¹¹ Post-Fordist labour, the labour of the general intellect, does not simply exploit particular habits, particular languages, particular cultural dimensions; it exploits the capacity for acquiring new habits and new languages. The generic capacities of the species, rather than their specific manifestations, are directly put to work.

Virno's formulation of the increasing centrality of the natural, or historico-natural, aspects of transindividuality, the putting to work of the generic capacity rather than specific instantiations of language, habits, and comportments, takes up a different formulation from the *Communist Manifesto* than the generalised proletarianisation developed by Stiegler. In that text, Marx famously argued that with capitalism the various religious and political veils of exploitation are stripped bare, and humankind is confronted with 'naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation'. Coupled with Marx's remarks about the destruction of 'motley feudal ties' and limited national consciousness and literatures, it is possible to understand Marx as arguing for what Badiou called 'the desacralization of the social bond'.¹¹² The naked nature of capitalist exploitation, the constant need for new markets, new commodities, exposes the contingency of any limited and restricted social relations. Virno extends this idea, arguing that it is not just the artificiality of any social that comes to light, but the 'congenital potentiality of the human animal' that takes on a particular actuality.¹¹³ Capital, by ceaselessly transforming natural orders and undermining 'natural superiors', exposes the contingency of every social order. This potential, the potential to

110 Virno 2008, p. 45.

111 Virno 2009b, p. 142.

112 Badiou 1992, p. 56.

113 Virno 2009b, p. 146.

take on new habits, languages, and comportments, to be individuated differently according to pre-individual elements and different transindividuations, was always at work in different historical periods and modes of production, only now it comes directly to light in the flux and contingency of the capitalist production process. While the real abstractions of the wage and commodity form extended the potentially liberatory ideal of abstract humanity, the real abstraction of the general intellect extends a different liberation, one less dependent on a generic figure than on the possibility of generalised transformative work. There is, however, an ambiguity to this actualisation; primarily Virno suggests that the particular manifestation of humankind's generic capacities as labour power could lead to a dramatic revitalisation of political action, but there is also the possibility that the capitalist exploitation of transindividuality will be seen not just as the exposure of this potential but its realisation. The stripping away of the various halos, religious and otherwise, could be understood not as the exposure of the contingency of any social order, but as the realisation of the true natural basis of every social order, one based on labour and competition.¹¹⁴ The current phase of capitalism is often justified as being nothing other than the pure imposition of natural necessity, of the economy emerging into the light of day. It is impossible to acknowledge capitalism's tendency to strip bare all other social orders, denaturalising their various codes and structures, without struggling with its tendency to present itself as the truth of all social systems, as the exploitation or competition that has always existed finally revealed.¹¹⁵

114 Fisher 2009, p. 4.

115 This is Virno's explanation of Jameson's assertion, 'It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations' (Jameson 1994, p. xii). Virno argues that the various invocations of the end of history, or the impossibility of imagining any social relations other than the current relations, constitutes a kind of *déjà vu*. Virno follows Bergson in understanding memory to be constitutive of experience; there is a memory of a past that makes the present as such possible. This is not so much a matter of a recollection that is internal to experience as with Stiegler's use of Husserl, but rather of a necessary temporal difference, a difference between past, present, and future that is the basis for experience prior to the experience of any specific past, present, or future. This memory is split between temporal difference, a past that can never be present, and a memory of the past (Virno 2006c, p. 26). *Déjà vu* is thus a matter of mistaking the memory which is constitutive of experience for a memory of an experience. The same division between a generic faculty and a specific instance defines history. Every historical moment is a specific organisation of generic capacity, the capacity of language and labour; these generic capacities are the condition of history but are never present

as such. Historical 'déjà vu' takes place whenever the given instantiation of potentiality is taken to be synonymous with potentiality itself, whenever a given transindividual individuation is taken to be synonymous with transindividuality *tout court* (Virno 2006c, p. 21). Virno's remarks on *déjà vu* as a kind of historical experience, an experience of the end of history, helps shed light on two aspects of his historical argument that defines the current historical moment of post-Fordism with a becoming actual of the generic potential of individuation. First, the actualisation of this potential for individuation is paradoxical at best; the actualisation of a potential as potential is not the same as a potential being completely actualised. Its existence as potential, as possibility, must be maintained. There is, for Virno, a fundamental difference between the potential of humanity becoming a productive force, harnessed to the economy, and it becoming actualised. Second, and consequently, the relationship between capitalism, or post-Fordist capitalism and this potential, must be considered to be an ambivalent one, an ambivalence grounded on the actualisation of a potential as potential (Agamben 1999, p. 183). This second point is important because it also clarifies Virno's own ambiguous relationship with the idea of a potential or faculty. Virno's critics, such as Negri, have often understood his articulation of language and habits as pre-individual relations to be nothing other than a doctrine of faculties, of the innate components of humanity that remain unchanged (Casarino and Negri 2009, p. 128). Virno has endeavoured to distance himself from this understanding of human potential and possibility through Simondon's idea of the pre-individual. To posit the pre-individual components of language, habits, and affects as historico-natural is to posit them as neither a faculty nor a historical institution, but the unstable point where natural capacities intersect with historical transformations. It is for this reason that the virtual, the potential to constitute new habits and languages, can never become actualised.

Virno and Stiegler both draw from a particular philosophy of memory, Bergson or Husserl, to articulate an understanding of the relationship between history and individuation. In each case, memory becomes a way of making sense of history. Whereas Stiegler focuses on the history of the tertiary retentions, their shift from writing to visual and digital recording, Virno focuses on the relationship between the virtual, or the pre-individual, and its actualisation. Virno follows an argument that is similar to that of Deleuze, who tried to develop an idea of social relations based in part on Simondon's idea of individuation, one which is also indebted to Bergson as much as Marx. Deleuze argues that social relations, understood as primarily economic, must be understood as a virtual problem, a set of relations, that are actualised in every given society. This problem, what Deleuze calls an Idea, cannot be grasped in any given society, but only in the moment of upheaval (Deleuze 1994, p. 193). What links Deleuze and Virno is that in each case the goal was not the maintenance of some particular transindividual individuation, such as that of the citizen, but of a revolutionary transformation of the very conditions of individuation. This is a radically different reading of the conceptual logic of the *Communist Manifesto* from the one suggested by Stiegler; it is not a matter of criticising what is lost in the proletarianisation of the worker, but in what is gained as the contingency of pre-individuality and the social nature of transindividuality are laid bare, stripped of any mystification. In Virno's

The difference between how Stiegler and Virno read *The Communist Manifesto*, the former stressing proletarianisation, the later stressing the relentless transformation of social relations, underscores a deeper difference in how they understand the intersection between capitalism and anthropogenesis. Stiegler argued that the intersection was primarily framed through consumption, specifically the consumption of the culture industry in which the media of film, television, and the internet fundamentally transformed the tertiary retentions that formed the basis of transindividuation, while Virno argues that this shift is primarily through production, through the new productive processes of post-Fordism. This shift can be seen in how they situate their analysis with respect to Horkheimer and Adorno's influential analysis of the culture industry. Stiegler argues that this analysis needs to be deepened and radicalised: the schema that constituted the generic characters and predictable plots of the culture industry needs to be extended to schematisation, the synchronisation of thought that constitutes the temporal objects.¹¹⁶ In contrast to this, Virno argues that what defines and delimits Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of the culture industry is its Fordist dimension, whereby the 'spiritual production' of movies, television, and music were subject to the same overarching logic of the assembly line, a logic that stressed mass production and standardisation.¹¹⁷ Much of Horkheimer and Adorno's argument hinges on this crucial point, namely that the products of culture in order to be profitable must appeal to the widest possible audience, reducing everyone to that audience. As Adorno writes, 'The pre-digested quality of the product prevails, justifies itself and establishes itself all the more firmly in so far as it constantly refers to those who cannot digest anything not already pre-digested. It is baby-food: permanent self-reflection based upon the infantile compulsion towards the repetition of needs which it creates in the first place.'¹¹⁸ Virno's argument is not just that this period of standardisation has been surpassed, hundreds of channels and millions of webpages replacing the old standardisation of 'A' and 'B' pictures, making possible a culture industry of differentiation rather than standardisation, but also that the transition to post-Fordism must be understood as a fundamental shift in the role of the culture industry. The culture industry does not just produce con-

later writings, this becomes the matter of a politics that would not attempt to compensate for humanity's constitutively undetermined pre-individual state by imposing some new state, some new rule, as a kind of nature, but attempts to give free play to the undetermined itself (Virno 2008, p. 64).

116 Stiegler 2012, p. 38.

117 Virno 2004, p. 59.

118 Adorno 1991, p. 57.

sumer goods, entertainment and distraction; it is no longer situated at the relative periphery of the economy, placating and disciplining a largely industrial base of workers; rather, it is now central to production. As Virno argues,

The culture industry produces (regenerates, experiments with) communicative procedures, which are then destined to function also as means of production in the more traditional sectors of our contemporary economy. This is the role of the communication industry, once post-Fordism has become fully entrenched: an industry of the means of communication.¹¹⁹

For Virno, the culture industry must be considered an industry not just in the sense that it continues and perpetuates the 'proletarianisation' of production into consumption, replacing the basic and fundamental know-how with standardised experiences and commodities, but in that it produces the 'means of production' of other industries, it produces the capacity to communicate, the knowledge and sensibilities, necessary for production itself.

As Marx argued, and Virno repeats, the 'social individual', the knowledge that becomes part of the production process is often produced outside of it, in 'free time'. As Marx writes,

Free time – which is both idle time and time for higher activity – has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and at the same time, practice [*Ausübung*], experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society.¹²⁰

The consequence of this is that the very activities that were defined in opposition to work have now been rendered productive. Virno cites Heidegger's two famous characterisations of 'inauthentic life', 'idle talk' and 'curiosity', framing them less in terms of authenticity and inauthenticity than in terms of their understated sociological content. The groundlessness of 'idle talk' and 'curiosity' is defined less in terms of their fundamental opposition to authentic

119 Virno 2004, p. 61.

120 Marx 1973, p. 712.

existence than in their opposition to production. It is precisely this that has changed with the integration of communication and knowledge in the production process. 'Idle talk', which is nothing less than the capacity of language to constitute its own ground, for speaking about nothing to become its own something, 'Things are so because one says so', and curiosity, the search for novelty for novelty's sake, become productive paradigms in the age of post-Fordist production.¹²¹ It is precisely such groundless, or self-grounding, language, and persistent search for novelty, that is put to work by contemporary post-Fordist techniques of marketing and production.¹²² As Virno writes, 'Rather than operating only after the workday, idle talk and curiosity have built their own offices.'¹²³ Marketing could not exist without idle talk and curiosity, without statements becoming their own basis and the ceaseless desire for the new. It is not just the technologies of the culture industry, the screens and computer interfaces, that have migrated into the production process, but the sensibilities and capacities: the attitudes and comportments that were defined by their independence from work have become part of it.

What is at stake in the transition to post-Fordism is a breakdown of not only the division between consumption and production, but also the much more classical division of human existence into labour, action, and thought. This division, which has its roots in Aristotle, but was famously revived by Hannah Arendt in the middle of the last century, posited labour as instrumental, dominated by the categories of means and ends, and action, determined by the categories of plurality and unpredictability. (Arendt's distinction was a three-part division between the cyclical nature of labour, caught up in the biological process of life, the instrumentality of work, and the uncertainty and plurality of action, but Virno focuses on just the distinction between the two). Arendt's analysis of the distinction is framed in terms of seeing the eventual displacement of action by work (and labour) as instrumentality and a concern for the necessities of existence enters into the public sphere. Virno argues that the opposite has taken place; it is not that action has become work, but that work, the productive sphere, has increasingly adopted the characteristics of action.

I maintain that it is in the world of contemporary labour that we find the 'being in the presence of others', the relationship with the presence of others, the beginning of new processes, and the constitutive familiarity

¹²¹ Heidegger 1996 p. 158.

¹²² Virno 2004, p. 90.

¹²³ Virno 1996a, p. 16.

with contingency, the unforeseen, and the possible. I maintain that post-Fordist, the productive labour of surplus, subordinate labour, brings into play the talents and qualifications which, according to a secular tradition, had more to do with political action.¹²⁴

Arendt's critique, like that of Horkheimer and Adorno, remained within a Fordist paradigm, understanding the intersection between work and politics to be dominated by mass production, instrumentalisation, and standardisation. Work, *homo faber*, posed a problem to politics because it risked carrying over the instrumentality, teleology, and necessity into the realm of politics. Arendt's concern was that politics would become a factory. In contrast to this, the post-Fordist moment presents us with a different intersection in which the plurality, contingency, and plurality that defines action has been put to work, becoming the source of production and profit. For Virno, the critiques of the attitudes, sensibilities, and ethics of the mid-twentieth century have to be fundamentally revised given the shifts in the contemporary relations of production, shifts that have brought what were once the marginal dimensions of cultural production to the centre. The hidden abode of production has become our new public square.

Despite the fact that Virno reverses Arendt's central idea regarding work and action, or argues that history itself has reversed her analysis, he holds onto and in fact extends one of the central terms of her criticism, namely that the scrambling of the division between work and action also undermines the division between public and private. For Arendt, this distinction dissipated in the rise of what she termed 'the social', as what used to be considered private, the economy, increasingly comes to dominate the tasks of the state.¹²⁵ Virno, drawing from the idea of transindividuality, understands this transformation differently; it is less a matter of the private entering into politics (as Marx argued, the politics of the state have always served class interests) than it is one of recognising the profound transformations of both public and private, as intellect becomes a productive force. As we saw in the first chapter, transindividuality as a concept cuts across divisions of individual and society, public and private, arguing for their constitutive intertwining. With the rise of the culture industry and the productive nature of the general intellect, this intertwining becomes uncanny: there is something public, common, in every thought, and something private, intimate, in every new product of the culture industry. It might be pos-

124 Virno 2004, p. 51.

125 Arendt 1958, p. 46.

sible to say, preserving the classical schema of Arendt's thought, that for Virno the central issue is neither work (*poeisis*) nor action (*praxis*) but the becoming public of intellect. However, public takes on a strange, even ambivalent, signification here, encompassing both the public as exposure to other, which is to say relational, dimensions of the productive process and the public as it is traditionally understood, as a political process. This ambivalence of the term reflects and indicates the ambivalence of the current historical moment. These two points, the reversal of the relation of work to action, and the ambiguity of the dissolution of the public and private are related. The inclusion of communication, interaction, and relation into the productive process produces an odd reversal. People are more political, more interactive and communicative in the realm of production, a realm considered private by definition, than they are in the political realm. In the hidden abode of production, they interact, talk, and communicate, while in the political sphere they pull a lever to vote; the public sphere of democratic politics is constrained to Fordist technologies of communication and relation. The public can have any candidate they want, so long as it is from one of the established parties. The ambivalence of the public stems from this fundamental contradiction. As Virno writes,

When the fundamental abilities of the human being (thought, language, self-reflection, the capacity for learning) come to the forefront, the situation can take on a disquieting and oppressive appearance; or it can even give way to a *non-governmental* public sphere, far from the myths and rituals of sovereignty.¹²⁶

As it stands, 'publicness' exists in the private sphere under the rule of capital, where it is subject to hierarchy and domination of exploitation, and in turn the ossified official public sphere, the sphere of political decision and action.

Thus, to return to the contradiction Marx glimpsed between exchange and production as two different individuations, it is no longer a matter of the isolated subject of freedom, equality, and Bentham in the sphere of exchange contrasted with the co-operative power of species-being in the hidden sphere of production, or of the anarchy of competition against the discipline of production, but between what could be called a public sphere without publicness, a politics governed by mechanical and disciplinary manners of counting votes and amassing responses to surveys, and what Virno calls 'publicness without a public sphere', the economic exploitation of the general intellect. The

¹²⁶ Virno 2004, p. 40.

former refers to the ossified structures of representational democracy, which exclude the very public that they claim to represent. The latter is what happens when publicness, the powers of knowledge, communication, and relation are developed and made productive, but are denied any political transformative power, being subject entirely to the rule of profit. Virno argues that this rule takes the form of hierarchies and subordinations that are increasingly personal, personal because they encompass not just labour power, understood as the capacity to work, but also the capacity to communicate and relate. 'Nobody is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others, that is to say, their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labour'.¹²⁷ There is thus a double alienation, a loss of a world in that this capacity cannot become public, but also a fundamental alienation from the conditions of one's own communicative activity, an alienation from the pre-individual relations that are constitutive of individuation.¹²⁸ Virno's redefinition of alienation as an alienation from the pre-individual, or rather from the constitutive relation to the pre-individual, that which conditions without being conditioned, is the closest his analysis of post-Fordist transindividuality comes to Stiegler's critique of the proletarianisation of subjectivity.

It is possible to understand Virno as radicalising and extending Marx's critique of the split between the political sphere and the economy, an extension that perhaps benefits from Antonio Negri's analysis, which sees the true generative force of social relations to be in the process of production, in living labour.¹²⁹ It is not, however, a matter of opposing the egotistical subject of civil society with the co-operative force of living labour, but rather of recognising that the very qualities of political action, communication, contingency, and relations, already exist within the post-Fordist labour process. However, it is crucial not to over-emphasise the 'prefigurative' dimension of this possibility, presenting it as communism residing in the hidden abode of production. Marx's own analysis is useful here, since as much as Marx recognised the co-operative dimension of species-being, he argued that in capitalism it was something that could only appear as an attribute of capital itself. As Marx writes,

This entire development of the productive forces of socialized labour (in contrast to the more or less isolated labour of individuals), and together

¹²⁷ Virno 2004, p. 63.

¹²⁸ Virno 2006, p. 38.

¹²⁹ Negri 1999, p. 306.

with it the uses of science (the general product of social development), in the immediate process of production, takes the form [stellt sich dar] of the productive power of capital. It does not appear as the productive power of labour, or even of that part of it that is identical with capital. And least of all does it appear as the productive power either of the individual workers or of the workers joined together in the process of production.¹³⁰

Virno follows this analysis, extending the term fetishism to encompass precisely this process by which characteristics that belong to the human mind, 'sociality, capacity for abstraction and communication, etc.', are assigned to a thing, such as money.¹³¹ Virno's redefinition of the fetish is in line with Marx's observation that capital appears to be more productive as co-operation and knowledge become a productive force. The idea that co-operation increasingly takes the form of capital itself, that capital becomes the fetish, offers much for thinking about capitalist sociality, a sociality defined by the paradoxes of 'gregarious isolation'. However, it still leaves the sense that there is a co-operative kernel inside the mystical shell, as if it were possible to simply dispense with this appearance of capital to arrive at the co-operative relations within.¹³²

As we saw with Marx's analysis in *Capital*, as much as it was possible to locate a co-operative dimension of species activity in the production process, this co-operation was still subject to exploitation, the effects of which lead to a despotism over the productive process. Virno marks a similar ambivalence over the productive co-operation of the general intellect, but it is framed in different terms consistent with the fragmentation of the factory space and factory discipline in the contemporary production process. As much as the flexibility, communication, and co-operative dimension of post-Fordist labour constitute the possibility for a realisation of democratic forms of political action, denied in the formal spheres of representation and participation, Virno argues that the predominant forms that this co-operation takes are cynicism and opportunism. The materialist basis for this cynicism is given in the transformation of the real abstraction, the shift from the abstractions of the equivalent to the abstractions of the contingent and incommensurable. The absence of any common reference, any common rule, between different protocols, paradigms, and forms of knowledge, as workers go from client to client, and job to job, each with

130 Marx 1977, p. 1024.

131 Virno 2006, p. 40.

132 Galloway 2011, p. 244.

their own rules and paradigms, constitutes the materialist basis for an indifference to the very idea of common rules. If cynicism is a subjective response to the incommensurability of different tasks and different jobs, then opportunism is the response to their instability.¹³³ Post-Fordism has dispensed with the long-term labour contract, and with it the ethical values of deferred gratification, dependability, and commitment. In its place it has created the values of networking, flexibility, and manoeuvrability. Opportunism is a response to this transformation, and to the breakdown of any division between personal relations and economic relations; it is social relations as universal networking. The exploitation of the general intellect does not stand above it, as a division between co-operation and command in the Fordist labour process, but penetrates into its deepest recesses, transforming its basic components of subjectivity into opportunism and cynicism. Cynicism is quite simply the tendency to accept the given and shifting terms of power without worrying about their ground. Whatever rule is in operation is the rule, and these rules will also change.

Virno illustrates the ambivalent nature of the social individuality, the simultaneous emergence of the transindividual nature of subjectivity and social relations and its control by commodification, by drawing on several terms from the Marxist tradition. As Virno states,

Reification is what I call the process through which preindividual reality becomes an external thing, a *res* that appears as a manifest phenomenon, a set of public institutions. By alienation I understand the situation in which the preindividual remains an internal component of the subject but one that the subject is unable to command. The preindividual reality that remains implicit, like a presupposition that conditions us but that we are unable to grasp, is alienated.¹³⁴

Virno is close to Stiegler on two points here. First, in giving a somewhat positive dimension to reification, in which the externalisation of the pre-individual in things, structures, and institutions, is the condition of the becoming public of the pre-individual. Virno's revalorisation of reification is surprising given its long history in Marx, but is consistent with both his understanding of the general intellect as both technology and subjectivity, as well as his understanding of public as a constituent plurality. Although even this positive dimen-

¹³³ Virno 1996a, p. 38.

¹³⁴ Virno 2006, p. 38.

sion of reification is undercut somewhat by Virno's redefinition of the Marxist concept of fetishism in the same interview, a redefinition that paradoxically encompasses what is generally considered to be reification, the transformation of activity into a thing. As Virno states, 'Fetishism means assigning to something – for example to money – characteristics that belong to the human mind (sociality, capacity for abstraction and communication, etc.).'¹³⁵ Taken together these two redefinitions of Marxist terms through Simondon's concepts reflect the fundamental ambiguity of exteriorisation, or grammatisation, in which the inscription or recording of the pre-individual in technologies or machines both reveals and obscures its collective power. Virno, however, further develops the negative dimension of this exteriority by redefining alienation as a 'pre-individual' that remains implicit but impossible to grasp. This is the closest Virno comes to Stiegler in that this redefinition of alienation could be considered another way of representing what the latter calls proletarianisation, the machines and commodities which condition the pre-individual but cannot be modified or transformed.

In sharp contrast to Stiegler, who sees in the intersection between transindividual individuation and capital only the dissolution of any constitution of the collective and the individual, Virno sees the constitution of a new collectivity and new individuality, a social individual and multitude, in the contemporary process of production, even if this social individual is currently only a possibility lingering in an abode of production which remains hidden – not by the factory doors but by the fetish of capital and money. To the extent that the dynamic and transformative potential of transindividuality appears, it appears as the power of capital. The fundamental ambivalence of this situation, as simultaneously liberating and oppressive, is encapsulated by the role of the public. What could be called 'actually existing' transindividuation, the domination of the productive powers of transindividuality under the rule of capital and post-Fordist exploitation, is the disquieting and oppressive appearance, but this appearance has to continually be judged against the possibility of a new public, one far from the state or capital.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Virno 2006, p. 40.

¹³⁶ The disquieting and oppressive appearance that Virno alludes to in this passage has been documented and investigated by Ivor Southwood. Southwood describes the confluence of professionalisation (as a kind of formless content) and insecurity: 'The skills required to present oneself correctly to employers and generate future opportunities constitute a new untrammelled form of emotional labor, driven by insecurity, which leaks over into leisure and consumption and colonises the social life whose energy it has drained, transforming the home into an office and friendship into a promotional network' (Southwood 2011,

Conclusion: Between Philosophical Anthropology and Political Economy

At the level of political economy, the opposition between Stiegler and Virno is ultimately between two different conceptions of capitalism and its tendencies. Stiegler follows, and extends, the logic of proletarianisation, extending the loss of knowledge over the productive process into all spheres of life. This extension effectively reverses Marx's understanding of the political potential of proletarianisation, offering an explanation as to why that history was never realised. In Stiegler's account, proletarianisation has not resulted in the masses realising that they have nothing to lose but their chains; rather, it has resulted in a further disintegration of the very capacity for transindividual individuation, the formation of a 'we' and an 'I'. In contrast to this, Virno takes up something of a minor thesis of Marx – namely the idea of capitalism becoming increasingly dependent upon technology, science, and industry, to the point where labour becomes a miserable residue – and inverts it. Labour time is reduced and replaced not necessarily by machines but by a generalised social knowledge that exceeds it. As much as these two positions are opposed – with the first, the thesis of proletarianisation, arguing for the complete and utter immiseration of the subjectivity of the worker, while the other, which could be called socialisation, argues for the displacement of work by productive knowledge – they are each presented as end points for capitalism, as moments of contradiction and crisis. Stiegler and Virno retain these contradictory understandings of the relation between capitalism, subjectivity, and knowledge, but dispense with the eschatological dimension. These are no longer conceptualisations of the end of capitalism, but rather conceptualise a fundamental transformation of social relations, of the basis of transindividuation that defines the present. Thus, as much as Stiegler and Virno work from different theses, as well as different spheres, namely consumption and production, they stress a similar point: in order to understand the limits of Marx's thought, its inability to grasp the present, it is necessary to think through the problem of transindividuation. Transindividuation becomes a concept necessary to grasping real subsumption.

The intersection of transindividuality and capitalism provides two very different pictures of social relations, two different possibilities for politics. Stiegler argues that what defines the present is a destruction of individuation through

p. 27). It is striking that despite Virno's tendency to think through a constitutive ambiguity of the becoming public of transindividuation, it is often the negative dimension that has taken on salience with contemporary writers and critics.

the commodification of transindividuation. While Virno argues that contemporary capitalism can be defined as the exploitation of the very potential for individuation, the pre-individual relations of language, habit, and custom. We might thus describe the current conjuncture, the current stage of capitalism, as being defined by the increasing commodification of the transindividual, as the very basis of memory and individuation are marketed as commodities, and an increased exploitation of the pre-individual, as not only specific languages and habits are put to work, but the capacity to form new habits and languages. Such a formulation preserves Stiegler's and Virno's particular readings of Simondon's terminology: Stiegler focuses almost exclusively on transindividuality as it is materialised in tools, objects, and signs, while Virno, despite the fact that he uses both terms, tends to favour the pre-individual as a way of thinking the conjunction of the indeterminacy and potentiality of the general intellect. However, we could just as easily reverse it and argue that what defines the present is the commodification of the pre-individual and the exploitation of the transindividual. Such a formulation is not necessarily more accurate with respect to Simondon, but it has the advantage of underscoring the fact that what is being commodified is the basis of individuation, the capacity to create singular memories and interpretations, while what is being exploited, and put to work, is fundamentally relational and social, though not necessarily collective in any discernible sense.

From the vantage point of transformation, it appears that Stiegler and Virno can be differentiated not just in terms of their respective focuses on consumption or production, disindividuation or the social individual, but on the larger issue in terms of how they understand the fundamental transformation of capitalism. As we have already noted, Stiegler understands the fundamental transformation of capital to be located in its specific crises, first in a crisis of overproduction, of an excess of productive capacity, which necessitates the creation of new markets and new circuits of consumption. These new markets and networks short-circuit the long networks of individuation that historically defined the transindividuation of the citizen as transindividuation. Stiegler explicitly argues against any understanding that situates the transformation of capital against the backdrop of the struggles and critiques against it. He makes this argument not in terms of what is often referred to as the 'autonomist hypothesis', the argument developed first by Mario Tronti, and popularised by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, that working-class resistance precedes and prefigures the transformations of capital, but in terms of Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. In that book, Boltanski and Chiapello distinguish between what they refer to as the 'artistic critique' of capital and the 'social critique' of capital; the former is aimed primarily at the massification and

standardisation of capital, while the latter is oriented towards exploitation and poverty.¹³⁷ The second half of the twentieth century saw the rise of the former at the expense of the latter, a theme which can be seen through the various discourses on authenticity, alienation, and conformity, from existentialism to the Frankfurt School.¹³⁸ Boltanski and Chiapello argue that capitalism responded to these critiques, diversifying and differentiating consumer goods to produce markets in authenticity and transforming the organisation of labour to stress flexibility, self-invention, and change over stability and linearity. Stiegler makes the claim that this argument is fundamentally flawed, idealist even, in making a transformation of ideas, the different modalities of critique, the driving force of historical change.¹³⁹ For Stiegler, this shift, a shift from a critique of inequality to authenticity, has to be seen as an effect of the larger transformation of the tertiary retentions that constitute the basis for transindividuation. Stiegler's materialism is not one of the means of production, but what he calls the supports of production, the tertiary retentions that are the basis for memory and individuation. It is the contradiction between supports of production and relations of production, rather than means and forces, which defines historical change and transformation.¹⁴⁰ Individuation and disindividuation are framed by this tension. From this perspective, the artistic critique that culminated in May 1968 is nothing but a ruse of history, an expression of the general short-circuit of individuation that pushes the drive for immediate gratification into the space of politics.¹⁴¹ The driving force of historical transformation is not the various rebellions against capitalist commodification or exploitation, but rather the interplay between the cultural and technical transformations, which are driven by the demand to create new consumers and expand markets.

Stiegler's emphasis on subjectivity, on transindividuality, renders the division between artistic and social critique, between a critique of the subjective compartments produced or demanded by a new work regime, such as conformity and discipline, and the social and economic effects, exploitation and inequality, meaningless. As much as Stiegler incorporates subjectivity into the economy, he sees it primarily as an effect not so much of economic changes as

137 Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 346.

138 Berardi 2009, p. 42.

139 Stiegler 2006b, p. 51.

140 Stiegler 2006b, p. 59.

141 Stiegler takes up what could be called, following Rancière, a reversal of the Marxist metapolitical critique of politics, in which an ideal of republican democracy must be protected from consumer individuality (Rancière 2006, p. 22). For a reading of May 1968 as a consumer revolt, see Ross 2004.

the technological change brought about by the economy. Stiegler understands the consumer as a transindividual disindividuation, a disindividuation that is entirely adequate to capital. One could add, following his discussion of financialisation, that it is nothing other than contemporary capitalism personified. Stiegler's consumer is not only perfectly functional to the capitalist system, constantly purchasing the conditions of individuation through commodities rather than social relations and traditions, but is perfectly homologous with it. As Stiegler writes,

Novelty is thus systematically valorised at the expense of durability, and this organization of detachment, that is, of unfaithfulness or infidelity (equally called flexibility), contributes to the decomposition of the libidinal economy, to the spread of drive-based behaviours and to the liquidation of social systems.¹⁴²

Subject and economic system are each oriented towards the short term, towards the immediate gain.

In contrast to this, Virno argues that the genesis of post-Fordism, of the productive putting to work of the habits and sensibilities developed during 'free time', must be traced to the struggles against the rigidity and discipline of the Fordist work regime, against a life confined to the factory walls.¹⁴³ The regimented and repetitive work of the Fordist factory, and a life limited to such a factory, was something that people actively struggled against, demanding freedom from strictures and routine. It is in this sense that the transformation of capital, the turn towards the productive capacities of language, affect, and habits, has to be considered a counterrevolution, a revolution in reverse, 'an impetuous innovation of modes of production, forms of life, and social relations that, however, consolidate and again set in motion capitalist command'.¹⁴⁴ Thus, we could argue that Virno also calls into question the division between 'artistic critique' and 'social critique', but rather than subordinate both to the general transformation of transindividual relations, the aesthetic and social dimensions are constantly intersecting with each other as new subjectivities, new sensibilities, are produced by, and made productive of, new regimes of social accumulation. Social critiques, critiques of exploitation and organisation of labour, carry with them new understandings, and new sensibilities and

¹⁴² Stiegler 2010b, p. 83.

¹⁴³ Virno 1996b, p. 243.

¹⁴⁴ Virno 1996b, p. 241.

aesthetic critiques carry possibilities for new social relations (this point will be returned to in the next chapter). This is a version of the 'autonomist hypothesis', the idea that working-class resistance precedes and prefigures capitalist restructuring, with the added caveat that there is distortion in this figuration.

The tension, even contradiction, between Stiegler's and Virno's different understandings of the current conjuncture, the intersection of capitalism and individuation, could be referred back to the division between consumption and production as the specific areas of focus. As such it would repeat and deepen Marx's analysis of the sphere of exchange and the hidden abode of production as two different individuations, two different productions of subjectivity. Marx argued that consumption produced a subject of 'freedom, equality, and Bentham', individuated, while production relied on the social individual, on the shared dimension of species-being, even if capitalism made it difficult to recognise this fact. A similar thought underlies Hegel's distinction between civil society and the state. It would thus be possible to argue that what Stiegler and Virno offer, taken together, is a picture of the conflict between two different individuations: one framed in consumption, the other in production. Whereas Hegel and Marx saw these different individuations, the individuations produced by civil society and the state, the sphere of consumption and the hidden abode of production, to concern different individuations of knowledge. Knowledge in each of these cases was primarily the knowledge of social relations themselves. The subject of civil society, the individual of the relations of exchange, failed to grasp the connections and relations that defined and determined its existence. In Stiegler's and Virno's accounts of the political economy of transindividuation, knowledge is no longer simply the knowledge or representation of the relations of society itself but encompasses knowledge in a much more expansive sense, not just the knowledge of social relations but also the quotidian knowledge of the various practices that produce and reproduce existence. On this point, however, they diverge as much as converge, as we have seen that Stiegler identifies contemporary capitalism with a loss of knowledge through proletarianisation and Virno identifies it with a diffuse intellectual potential. The stark opposition between these two different understandings of knowledge hinges on the relationship between knowledge and transindividuation. Stiegler's primary focus is on a proletarianisation of the basic knowledge of life [*savoir vivre*] as machines and technology make our food and define our experience, while Virno is primarily concerned with the sphere of references and capacities that are put to work in the production process, capacities produced by and productive of the culture industry. Combining the two we could paint a picture of a modern individual, competent enough to use the latest operating system and able to recognise references to the entire

catalogue of the products of the culture industry, but unable to prepare food or write a paragraph. Proletarianisation and socialisation coincide by affecting different aspects of knowledge, different aspects that could be understood by referring to the different sides of the commodity; the first concerns the use value of knowledge, its capacity to produce and reproduce existence, while the second concerns what could be called an 'exchange value' of sorts; it is knowledge that only exists in being exchanged, in being circulated. Horkheimer and Adorno came close to this idea of 'exchange value' in their description of the social imperative to know and cite the culture industry. As Horkheimer and Adorno write,

What might be called use value in the reception of cultural assets is being replaced by exchange value; enjoyment is giving way to being there and being in the know, connoisseurship by enhanced prestige. The consumer becomes the ideology of the amusement industry, whose institutions he or she cannot escape. One simply 'has to' have seen Mrs Miniver, just as one 'has to' subscribe to *Life* and *Time*. Everything is looked at from only one aspect: that it can serve as something else, however vaguely that other thing might be envisaged. No object has an inherent value; it is valuable only to the extent that it can be exchanged.¹⁴⁵

Just as the worker in the initial stage of capitalism was stripped of the means of production, becoming only labour power, a source of value that necessarily must be exchanged, sold on the labour market, so the worker in cognitive capital becomes part of the general intellect, producing knowledge which must circulate in order to have value. Knowledge must exist in relation, must be exchanged or shared, to have any value at all.¹⁴⁶

André Gorz offers another way of making sense of the division between the knowledge that is destroyed and the knowledge that is rendered productive for capital. This division is between experiential knowledge, the knowledge that is produced and circulated in common life, and formalised knowledge.¹⁴⁷ Formalised knowledge is capable of being exchanged and circulated, while experiential knowledge is necessarily embodied, coinciding with the individual who utilises it.¹⁴⁸ As Gorz writes, 'The great majority of people know more and

¹⁴⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, p. 128.

¹⁴⁶ Moulner Boutang 2011, p. 57.

¹⁴⁷ Gorz 2007, p. 46.

¹⁴⁸ Dardot, Laval and Mouhoud 2007, p. 226.

more things, but have less and less know-how and understanding'.¹⁴⁹ For Gorz, there is a lingering question as to whether this formalised knowledge, knowledge ripped from its context and conditions, can ever become something like a culture or common life, a question which has as its existential correlate the question of the full automatising of knowledge. As much as Gorz, like Stiegler, stands as something of an antidote to claims of the radical potential of cognitive capitalism, situating it within the capitalist tendency to either commodify or possess knowledge through its formalisation, his analysis is predicated too much on the separation of knowledge from life. The reference to Marx and the distinction between use value and exchange value has the merit of focusing on the inseparable nature of the two sides of knowledge; for Marx, there is no exchange value without use value (although the inverse is not necessarily true). Thus, there would necessarily be some use, some practical or personal dimension to any knowledge, no matter how much it is oriented towards its circulation and exchange. The most programmed devices entail some kind of 'know-how', even if it is just pushing buttons, and, more to the point, given the multivalent nature of any use, no device, no matter how 'idiot-proof', can completely contain or limit the multiplicity of uses that can be made of it. Part of the problem here concerns writing about 'knowledge' or, its opposite, stupidity, in the singular and abstract.¹⁵⁰ Ours is neither an age of generalised intelligence or mass of stupidity, but rather is one in which different knowledges, different intelligences, and different forms of ignorance are constantly being produced and circulated, and this production and circulation relates back to transindividuality in its political, economic, and technological dimensions.

The question of the political organisation of knowledge returns us to not only the institutional divisions that Hegel grasped between the transindividualisations of civil society and the state, or that Marx grasped between consumption and production, but also to the split between the affective, imaginative, and rational grasp of these individuations, a problem which runs through all three of the thinkers, but is developed most forcefully in Spinoza. Stated broadly, this split could be described as that between 'imagined' and 'actual' individuations. This question, in different forms, runs through all three of the figures, but it does so in the form of the relation between a highly individualised individuation, man as 'kingdom within a kingdom', a self-interested subject of civil society, or 'freedom, equality, and Bentham', and the relations, natural and social, that are its condition. Spinoza, Hegel, and Marx all had different perspectives on the

149 Gorz 2007, p. 148.

150 Caffentzis 2013, p. 108.

imagined or real nature of this individuation. Or, more accurately, they have different understandings of the effects, or effectivity, of this imaginary individuation. The contradiction between Stiegler and Virno, a contradiction oriented towards contemporary capitalism, is not another version of this same problem, of 'the most developed social relations' producing the isolated individual, to use Marx's terms. For reasons that are both philosophical and historical, namely the development of the conceptual vocabulary of transindividuation and the development of contemporary capitalism, Stiegler and Virno shift the terms of opposition. It is no longer a matter of individuation, the individuation of civil society or capital, against the social relations that produce it. The contradiction is now between disindividuation, the loss of individuation produced by consumer society, and not just social relations or collectivity, but transindividuality, considered not simply as a condition, but as a productive and transformative activity. This makes it increasingly difficult to consider these two individuations (or disindividuations) together, ascribing each to a different institution of contemporary capitalism.

Of all of the various points of distinction that separate, even divide, Stiegler from Virno, the focus on consumption versus production, the negative or positive assessment of contemporary individuation, perhaps the most striking or most salient is their radically different understanding of how to conceive of politics. This difference is prior to, and in some sense conditions, their radically different understandings of the effects of contemporary capitalism on politics. For Stiegler, a certain idea of the citizen, an idea of a politics based on the gap between justice and law, between the inheritance of a tradition and the belief in its future, remains the insurmountable horizon of the political. It is for this reason that the decomposition of the individuation constitutive of the citizen is understood as a decomposition of politics, and not just its transformation. In sharp contrast to this, Virno traces the possibility that the current transformation of transindividuation constitutes the basis for a new politics, no longer wedded to the idea of representation. Virno is less interested in the citizen as a political figure than he is in a fundamental concept that underlies it, that of the necessity of representation to the constitution of any political collective. The rule of every political collective, every formation of a people, has been in one form or another a version of Hobbes's dictum that unity lies with the unity of the representer, not the represented.¹⁵¹ For there to be anything like a people, anything like a state, there must be a sovereign whose unified will and intention will stand in for that of the people.

151 Gilbert 2014, p. 51.

What Virno's interest in the political economy of transindividuation underscores is that the classical opposition between the people, unified by a sovereign, and the multitude, capable of acting without unity or unification, needs to be revisited. What has changed since the time of Hobbes and Spinoza are the conditions of communication, deliberation, and dissemination of knowledge, the general conditions of transindividuation. These changes have not taken place through the development of the public sphere, but through the transformations of the labour process as labour, co-operation, encompasses communication. Virno marks this transformation from the general will to the general intellect. As Virno writes:

The One of the multitude, then, is not the One of the people. The multitude does not converge into a *volonté générale* for one simple reason because it already has access to a *general intellect*. The public intellect, however, which appears in the post-Ford world as a mere resource of production, can constitute a different 'constitutional principle': it can overshadow a non-state public sphere. The many, in as much as they are many, use the publicness of the intellect as their base or pedestal: for better or worse.¹⁵²

While the term of the general will is drawn from Rousseau, it is not entirely out of place in Virno's conflict between Hobbes and Spinoza, albeit somewhat retroactively. The social contract in its various guises from Hobbes to Rousseau presupposes the idea that the people cannot (or must not) communicate, that the only ground for political unity is that which everyone can will independently of communication or connection.¹⁵³ Security is both the minimum con-

¹⁵² Virno 2004, p. 42.

¹⁵³ Hobbes makes this isolation a condition of his political anthropology; it is the corollary of a state of nature that is 'nasty, brutish and short'. Which is why Hobbes's social contract is not a collective decision, but an act by which each individual authorises the sovereign to act in his name (Matheron 1997, p. 212). For Rousseau, the fact that isolation and separation is a precondition of political consensus, of the general will, is less an anthropological given than a political imperative. As Rousseau writes, 'For the general will to be well articulated, it is therefore important that there should be no partial society in the state and that each citizen make up his own mind' (Rousseau 1987, p. 156). We could see these two gestures, Hobbes arguing against the very possibility of a democratic foundation of the state and Rousseau's argument against partial society, as attempts to ward off 'actually existing' collectivities in society, namely classes (Althusser 1982, p. 151). Thus, individualism, whether anthropological or moral, is framed against any acknowledgment of classes within society.

dition of unity; it is that which everyone necessarily wills, and the maximum conditions of sovereignty, its ultimate conditions are undefined leading to the maximum possibility of intervention.¹⁵⁴ The consensus around security of self and property require neither deliberation nor discussion; it is an idea common to all without being communicated. The general will unifies disparate individuals through the shared will for security and safety, a will that becomes unified, becomes one in the unity of the sovereign or state. In contrast to this, the general intellect makes unity a presupposition, not a result.¹⁵⁵

The one that is a presupposition of the intellect, the shared linguistic and communicative capacity, is radically different from the one that is the result of political representation. In a later text, drawing from the unlikely bedfellows of Simondon and Duns Scotus, Virno utilises Duns Scotus's idea of a common nature to articulate an idea of one that will be common and not universal. The former not only exists prior to its conceptualisation, prior to its division into one and many; unlike the universal which is always represented as shared attribute or belonging, the common exists prior to its name.¹⁵⁶ The common in this case is thus another way of naming a pre-individual reality that constitutes the basis for both the constitution of collectivity and individuation. What this diversion into medieval ontology potentially clarifies is that the 'one' we are speaking of with respect to the general intellect is neither some unified totality, the people that exist through the sovereign, nor is it some shared attribute that can be represented as a universal. The one, the 'less than numerical' unity that constitutes the general intellect is potential, or, better yet, a relation that does not exist outside of its singular instantiations.¹⁵⁷ Whereas the idea of the social contract, of the general will, reflected a consensus that did not require a relation, everyone in isolation decided that security is better than insecurity, the general intellect is a relation without consensus. The general intellect only exists in its singular instantiations, in the articulations that pass knowledge and habits from individual to individual. Its unity exceeds or falls short of any universal representation, any constitution of a state or people. It is more than the minimum condition of security, and thus something other than sovereignty.

Virno's understanding of the politics of transindividuation could be generally understood as prefigurative, in which the organisation of production under post-Fordist capital prefigures and precedes the revolutionary multitude. Framed in such a way, Virno's position would seem to be a reversal

¹⁵⁴ Negri 1989, p. 196.

¹⁵⁵ Virno 2004, p. 43.

¹⁵⁶ Virno 2009, p. 62.

¹⁵⁷ Virno 2009, p. 65.

of the autonomist hypothesis as proposed by Mario Tronti. It is no longer the resistance that prefigures capitalist exploitation, but the exploitation of the habits, knowledge, and language that prefigures a new 'non-state public' sphere. Virno's reversal is only apparent, however, in that these transformations are themselves the products of past struggles, as struggle prefigures transformations and vice versa. It is perhaps because of this constant interplay between struggle and transformation that Virno foregrounds the ambivalent nature of these transformations; they are always simultaneously the products of struggle and resistance. Virno underscores the fact that the transformation of labour, the direct putting to work of transindividuality, has two possible outcomes. The first, and the actually existing one, is one in which this activity takes on a 'disquieting' presence that Virno associates with cynicism and opportunism. The more people have to put to work the most intimate aspects of their individuation, their capacity to communicate and form habits, the more that this exploitation can appear as directly personal domination. The cynic takes the absence of a standard set of rules between different productive situations, different sites of work as the absence of rules *tout court*, while opportunism is identification with the shifting and precarious status of labour. The second outcome, the possibility of a non-state public sphere, is the liberatory kernel of this repressive situation. The directly productive nature of the fundamental aspects of individuation, habits, language, and knowledge reveals the productive nature of human activity; human activity does not just create things, but sociality, social relations, and the produced nature of even human sociality, what we take as given, this particular way of speaking, these particular social habits, and so on, is revealed to be a social and historical product rather than a natural given. If one adds to this experience of everything solid melting into air, the fact that production, labour, has become more communicative, social, and interrelated, the general picture it paints is of the opening of new political possibilities predicated on the constant reinvention and transformation of the conditions of social existence. The ambivalence of the present is the coexistence of new and deeper forms of domination existing side by side with new possibilities of liberation. While Virno is ambivalent about the actually existing exploitation of transindividuality, seeing in it both the condition for renewed exploitation and the potential for liberation, he is clear on how its political dimensions, in terms of both domination and liberation, are radically distinct from representational politics, from politics organised through the state.

The opposition between Stiegler and Virno could just as easily be described as an opposition between two very different concepts of political relations. Stiegler's politics are framed in terms of sustaining a historical legacy that is the precondition of a future, not just because it is framed through a kind

of nostalgia for the figure of the citizen, but more to the point because its general schema is one of memory of the past and desire for a future. Memory, the relation to the long circuits of tradition, of law, is a necessary condition for politics. Politics is framed between an inheritance and an ideal, between the reception of a law and tradition, and its reinvention. Similarly Virno's politics are oriented towards the future, not just because they see revolutionary potential in the most recent manifestations of the transformations of labour, but also because politics has as its ground not the maintenance of a tradition but the practice of a radical reinvention of every tradition. What these two conceptions of politics have in common, however, is a relative separation of the political economy of transindividuation from politics. In each case it is a matter of the economic effects of transindividuation, conceived either as the marketing of memory or as the labour of social relations, on the political sphere. The economy either destroys politics, or makes possible its undoing, but it does so as a cause that acts on political transindividuations without being affected by them. The citizen or the basic principles of political action have been fundamentally transformed by consumption or post-Fordism, without remainder. Moving beyond this impasse entails bringing together not only the different registers of transindividuality we have discussed thus far, politics and economics, but also the different aspects of transindividuality, imagination, affects, and knowledge.

The Noopolitics of Capital: Imitation and Invention in Maurizio Lazzarato

The work of Maurizio Lazzarato intersects with that of Paolo Virno and Bernard Stiegler on multiple levels. First, and perhaps most immediately, there is the understanding of the current conjuncture. Lazzarato is the author of 'Immaterial Labour', an early and often criticised text, which attempted to thematise the cognitive and intellectual dimension of contemporary capitalism. In that text, Lazzarato defines immaterial labour as that which produces the informational or affective dimension of a commodity.¹ Like Virno and Stiegler, his understanding of the current conjuncture is framed through the intersection of knowledge and capitalism, through the labour that produces ideas, information, and knowledge. Lazzarato's later writings have continued to examine the contemporary transformation of capital through an investigation of debt, finance, and marketing. Lazzarato's strongest point of intersection with Stiegler and Virno is not his investigation of the novelty of contemporary capitalism, nor in the problem of transindividual social relations, but the fact that these two problems are necessarily related. Lazzarato's primary point of reference for this new understanding of social relations is not, as it was for Stiegler and Virno, the work of Gilbert Simondon, but the nineteenth-century sociologist Gabriel Tarde.² Lazzarato can thus be situated in the broader category of transindividual thinkers, grouped by the shared problematic rather than the shared point of reference. This difference of theoretical references would itself perhaps justify the inclusion of Lazzarato in this project, providing a point of distinction and clarification of the accounts of transindividuality informed by Simondon or Spinoza.³ However, my point here in dedicating an excursus to his thought has less to do with this general point of comparison than with the two particular points of intersection sketched out above, which provide a conceptual bridge between the last chapter and the next. First, and

1 Lazzarato 1996, p. 133.

2 As with Gilbert Simondon, Deleuze is an important figure (as is Guattari) in the resurrection of the reputation of Gabriel Tarde. Deleuze and Guattari dedicated a chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* to Tarde, specifically focusing on his transindividual understanding of social relations, what they term a 'microsociology' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 219).

3 Citton 2007, p. 1.

in some sense continuing the argument of the previous chapter, is the manner in which Lazzarato focuses on the intersection between contemporary capitalism and transindividuality, arguing that there has been a radical shift in this relation from Marx's time. Second, and looking ahead to the next chapter, Lazzarato offers a way of tying together the threads of the political articulation of transindividuality and the economics of transindividuality through what he calls 'noopolitics', the politics that acts on imagination, habits, and ideas.

While a complete study of Tarde's massive body of work encompassing sociology, philosophy, criminology, and fiction is beyond the scope of the current project, it is at least worth noting some of the central tenets that Lazzarato draws from. Lazzarato's engagement with Tarde is drawn from the latter's critique of political economy as much as from his political thought. The text that is at the centre of Lazzarato's revalorisation of Tarde is his two-volume study *La Psychologie Economique*. As Lazzarato argues, Tarde's double critique, a critique of individualism and holism, can be understood as first and foremost a critique of two perspectives in economics, the classical conception that began with Adam Smith and Marx's critique of capital and political economy.⁴ Thus the basic critical orientation follows Lordon more than Balibar, the figures of individualism are Smith (and, for Lazzarato, neoliberalism) rather than Locke, and the figure of holism is Marx rather than Hegel. Lazzarato's tendency to see Marx, or Marxism and socialism, as a holism, as positing a 'collective which takes on an existence that is separate from the singularities which produce it', marks something of a departure from the contemporary philosophers considered above, all of whom considered transindividuality to be at least a philosophy for Marxism (Stiegler and Lordon) if not already at work in Marx's thought (Balibar and Virno). Lazzarato's work, especially *Les Révolutions du capitalisme*, often works with a generic picture of Marx, dominated by determination, totality, and dialectics, as its point of theoretical opposition. Despite the fact that Lazzarato does not significantly draw from Simondon, his critique of Marx and Marxism draws from some of the same basic points of the former's criticism of Marx covered in Chapter 2, most notably the critique of the predominance of the economic individuation over all others.⁵ I will turn to the limits of Lazzarato's particular understanding of Marx, and political economy, in the conclusion of this section. More important for us here is the way in which this opposition is in part predicated on how intelligence, mind, and the relation

4 Lazzarato 2004, p. 26.

5 Lazzarato 2004, p. 13.

between minds are understood in both classical and Marxist understandings of political economy.

In Lazzarato's reading of Tarde, the division between neoclassical conceptions of the economy, focusing on the question of utility, and Marx's conception focusing on labour, has to be seen as not just two different conceptions of social relations, one individual, the other collective, but in how they posit identity over difference, quantity over quality. They would have more in common than would first appear. For Lazzarato, neoclassical economists and Marxism are connected by what they exclude, which is the realm of pre-individual imitations, adaptations, and antagonisms that define and determine social existence. Their opposition belies an identity at the level of how they posit subjectivity.⁶ This can be seen in their tendency toward uniformity, excluding the temporal and differential aspect of subjectivity. How this is excluded differs in each case. Classical economists focus on utility, on a measure of pleasure and pain, but this conception of utility is solipsistic and uniform, unable to comprehend the qualitative differences of time or the constitutive relations between different judgements and values.⁷ As Christian Laval argues, this reduction of qualitative difference to quantitative difference is necessary for political economy to constitute its particular object.⁸ Without the fundamental idea that different pains and pleasures are identical, both over time and between different individuals, the idea of any predictability or calculability is impossible. Marx's critique of political economy is based less on taste and judgement, the uniform calculations of pleasures and pain, than on labour, shifting from the sphere of exchange, where utility and its value are articulated, to the hidden abode of production, to labour. What Marx and classical economics have in common, despite their very different focus on utility and labour, consumption and production, is the transformation of subjectivity into something calculable, uniform, and predictable. They situate this calculability on different sides of the economic process, in consumption or production.

Lazzarato focuses on Marx's concept of abstract labour, understood as a reduction of the constitutive heterogeneity of individuation to a uniform standard of activity.⁹ However, Marx's concept of abstract labour is always defined in a dialectical relation to concrete labour, the specific labour of tailoring, weaving, etc. The abstraction of labour, its uniformity, referred not to the subjective dimension of effort or expenditure, but rather to the socially necessary labour

6 Lazzarato 2002, p. 39.

7 Lazzarato 2002, p. 117.

8 Laval 2007, p. 163.

9 Lazzarato 2002, p. 110.

time, the fact that the labour of disparate and different individuals had been brought to the same standard of productivity through the use of technological and social organisation.¹⁰ It is a social relation, a relation between different labours, and not an anthropological postulate, or even a dimension of experience. It is not simply the case that abstract labour is not uniform; it must be diverse, for without different people engaged in different actions, there would be no basis for exchange. Labour, like the commodity, is the contradictory unity of qualitative difference and quantitative equivalence. The abstraction of labour refers to its socially necessary productivity, not a uniformity of action or effort, although these two things often overlap as the technological means to improve productivity of labour, to reduce labour time, impose a standard and uniformity of action. The developments of the twentieth century, Taylorism and Fordism, have imposed this uniformity of action, effort, and thought onto labour. There is something of an equivocation between these two different senses of abstract, the abstraction that takes place 'behind the backs of the workers', rendering different actions interchangeable even as the workers involved are concerned with the concrete particularity of the task at hand, and the abstraction that excavates any particularity from a task, rendering labour uniform and repetitive. We could conceptualise these two different abstractions according to Marx's distinction between formal and real subsumption: the former imposes the capitalist form on a pre-existing labour process, exploiting a pre-existing social relation, subjecting it to the same form, that of wage labour, while the latter transforms the technical and social composition, producing a form of labour that is entirely adequate to the demands of capital.

Despite his tendency to dismiss Marx's idea of abstract labour as presupposing a uniformity that needs to be explained, it is not Lazzarato's last word on labour in Marx. Lazzarato argues that there are two different conceptions of labour in Marx. The first is abstract labour, understood as a uniform expenditure of human effort and energy. The second is found in living labour, in which the 'living' is understood as difference, as the qualitative difference of time and memory.¹¹ Two aspects of labour that are central to Marx's concept of the latter but marginal to the former, memory and cooperation, become integral to not only Tarde's concept of labour but social relations in general. Memory and cooperation are not just part of the factory floor but all of society. Memory in this case is not simply the retention of skills and knowledge, but also includes the way in which the past acts on the present, the formative role of habits and past beliefs. Second, co-operation is not left to the undefined relation of

10 Marx 1977, p. 134.

11 Tarde 1902a, p. 101; Lazzarato 2002, p. 119.

species-being, a relation which Marx describes as alternately competitive and co-operative, but encompasses the way which individuals imitate and adapt to the actions of others. What Marx leaves undefined in the chapter of *Capital* on 'Co-operation', the effects of different actions and beliefs on each other, can then be seen as Tarde's central concern.

For Tarde, the fundamental social relations are invention and imitation.¹² These two actions are constitutive of social existence, defining the transformations and shared habits that form the social as such. The first accounts for the constitution of new practices, habits, and ideas; the second for their dissemination and repetition. These fundamental pre-individual relations, which define both subjectivity and collectivity, have their affective and socio-historical dimension. At the level of affect, invention is active, a joy of creation; repetition, the repetition of an idea, a habit, is necessarily passive.¹³ Tarde's division between invention and imitation based on affect duplicates Spinoza's distinction between sadness and joy; however, the emphasis is less on the affect itself than on the relation to the activity. The affective dimension cuts transversally across the divide between intellectual and manual labour. Activity is distinguished less in terms of intellectual or manual activity, the work of the mind or body, than in terms of the joy of invention and the drudgery of repetition. Intellectual labour, the work of coding or a call centre, can be just as redundant as Fordist production: manual labour, the work of an artist or craftsperson, can be just as inventive as immaterial labour. This division between invention and imitation based on affect raises the question as to why anyone would intentionally imitate, or repeat, any action, idea, or habit. As Lazzarato argues, this can only be explained by the asymmetry of social space; imitations reflect hierarchies and inequalities.¹⁴ We imitate, adopting the styles, habits, and beliefs of others, because we believe these others to possess the power and influence that others possess.¹⁵

Imitation through hierarchy, through asymmetries of power, also defines our relation to money, which functions as a universal object of desire because of the belief attached to it. As Lazzarato writes, 'The modern economy is for Tarde essentially monetary because it is an economy of desire and belief, their articulation (invention) and their diffusion (imitation)'.¹⁶ On Lazzarato's reading, Tarde's theory of money anticipates, or duplicates, much of Marx's 'The Power

¹² Lazzarato 2002, p. 32.

¹³ Lazzarato 2002, p. 61.

¹⁴ Lazzarato 2002, p. 84.

¹⁵ Tarde 1902a, p. 12.

¹⁶ Lazzarato 2002, p. 88, my translation.

of Money in Bourgeois Society' (a text which, although it predates Tarde's, was published after his death); money is a social power because it is the power to transform the possible into the actual. It is from this assertion that Lazzarato's reading of Tarde offers a response to a question that we have examined with respect to Marx, Hegel, and Spinoza: why do people continue to identify with capital, with the economy, seeing in it the condition of the realisation of their desires, even as it exploits them? Lazzarato argues that this has to do with a fundamental affective difference; political authority, right, works on fear while money works on hope.¹⁷ While Lazzarato differs from Lordon with respect to the actual affective composition of money, money is both an object of hope and fear, they argue that the economic subjection is fundamentally more aligned, more colinearised, than political subjectifications. The best that politics, the state, can offer is protection from fears, while money, the economy, offers the realisation of desires. Add to this the fetish in which money, and the economy, appears as a necessary condition of our action, and you begin to have the genesis of a strong affective identification with money.

Returning to Tarde's critique of political economy, from this distinction between invention and imitation it is possible to argue that the distinction between Tarde and Marx (as well as Tarde and political economy) is less one of the difference between difference and uniformity, concrete and abstract, and more one of a method that examines the production of uniformity versus one that takes this uniformity as more or less assumed. In each case, classical political economy and Marx, what is taken as given, either a uniformity of tastes and desires or a uniformity of action and production, must be examined according to the process and relations that produce it. Stability, repetition, and regularity is not presupposed, but produced by the invention and imitation of different habits and beliefs.¹⁸ This is the work of advertising and marketing when it comes to desires and beliefs, and the work of management and discipline when it comes to productive activity. On this second point, Lazzarato's interest in Tarde echoes Foucault's interest in micro-politics, insofar as it is an examination of the processes by which living labour, the labouring body, is rendered equally productive and ultimately interchangeable. The parallels between Tarde and Foucault are quite strong. Their fundamental point is framed in terms of a critique of the underlying anthropology of labour in Marx, the naturalisation of labour power as a natural attribute of man or as a quantifiable expression of a uniform power. As much as they articulate their

¹⁷ Lazzarato 2002, p. 86.

¹⁸ Latour and Lépinay 2009, p. 9.

respective critiques as a critique of Marx *tout court*, they can also be understood as attempting to theorise the production of uniformity from difference. Their critique of the assumption of an abstract and standardised labour essence, an essence that they incorrectly attribute to Marx, makes it possible to posit how uniformity and abstraction are produced from the heterogeneity of different labouring bodies and minds. As Foucault writes,

So I don't think we can simply accept the traditional Marxist analysis, which assumes that, labour being man's concrete essence, the capitalist system is what transforms labour into profit, into hyper profit or surplus value. The fact is capitalism penetrates much more deeply into our existence. That system, as it was established in the nineteenth century, was obliged to elaborate a set of political techniques, techniques of power, by which man was tied to something like labour – a set of techniques by which people's bodies and time would become labour power and labour time so as to be effectively used and thereby transformed into hyper-profit.¹⁹

The critique of Marx's supposed anthropology is in some sense secondary to the positive task, that of analysing the power relations that produce labour power. A similar gesture is found in Tarde (and Lazzarato's use of Tarde). The difference is that Foucault situates this production of the abstract within a genealogy of the political technology of power, while Tarde situates it within an ontology of social relations. Where Foucault argues that the economy, the labour process, is necessarily dependent upon power relations that exceed it, Tarde argues that the economy, in terms of consumption and production, is necessarily situated within relations of imitation and invention that exceed it.

In this conception, the general intellect, the combined intellectual production of humankind, would be less the product of capitalist development than its precondition.²⁰ It is not posited at the end point of capitalist production, the point where the productive powers of science displace labour power, but at the origin of any labour process since the beginning of time. All labour, even the most isolated, necessarily utilises knowledge and skill that is passed down from others; it is made up of inventions and imitations. Such a claim is closer

19 Foucault 2000, p. 86. Foucault's wholesale critique of Marx here is complicated by his acknowledgement in other texts, most notably 'The Mesh of Power', initially presented in Brazil, in which he credits Marx for analysing the multiplicity of powers, a multiplicity which produces and disciplines the labouring subject (Foucault 2012).

20 Lazzarato 2002, p. 35.

to Balibar's assertion regarding the transindividual dimension of co-operation in the labour process than Virno's claim about the new relation of transindividuality brought about by the general intellect in contemporary capitalism. The economy, consumption and production, is situated in a series of relations, inventions and imitations that are necessary conditions for it but exceed its institutions and structures. What Tarde refers to as the social brain exists prior to the technological organisation of production, prior to the division of labour, rather than being its product as in the case of the general intellect.²¹ It is not situated at the end point of a series of economic and social transformations, but at their origin. It is not the result of capitalist production, but as the social brain, the co-operative intellect of society, it is at the beginning.

The brain is the privileged metaphor for understanding social co-operation because a brain is relatively undifferentiated, made up of the same fundamental stuff, its differences are relations, folds and connections, which come to define and differentiate its functions.²² If this sounds too holistic, too much like reducing individuals to nothing other than reflections of society, of the social brain, then Lazzarato's second tenet offers something of a corrective. As Lazzarato argues, it is impossible to oppose individual to society because the individual is also a society. The mind/brain is organised as a society, that is to say as a multiplicity of relations where some forces command and others obey.²³ Society is defined as in some sense being a mind, as being made up of connections and communications, but the individual is also defined as being a society, made up of relations. Tarde's similarity with Simondon is thus not just in overcoming the individual/society opposition through a conception of relations that could be described as transindividual, but that this is done through an examination of the constituent elements of individuality itself, what could be called the 'pre-individual'.²⁴

There is an irreducible historical dimension to Tarde's interest in the increased dissemination of different habits and ideas on each other, a historical dimension that is doubled by Lazzarato's use of Tarde to theorise contemporary capitalism. History is defined by the way in which Tarde defines his particular object of investigation, 'the public'. The public as an object of inquiry is both a new way of examining both the individual and society, according to their mutual transformation through habits, styles, ideas, and so on, and a new social

21 Lazzarato 2002, p. 10.

22 Tarde 1999, p. 220.

23 Lazzarato 2002, p. 129.

24 Lazzarato 2002, p. 225.

arrangement made possible by both the social and technological transformations of modernity.²⁵ Of course, there have been 'publics' of sorts throughout human history, but what interests Tarde is less the public of the ancient Greeks, or the feudal court, each defined and delimited by actual relations between individuals, than the anonymous public of modern society. It is from the latter that imitation and influence become unbounded, or 'deterritorialised', no longer restricted to the repetition of a particular group or class open to the imitation of everyone by everyone. The variability of fashion replaces the stability of customs.²⁶ This social deterritorialisation is coupled with the technologies of the newspaper, radio, movies, and eventually television and the Internet, all of which make possible the greater dissemination of beliefs, habits, and ideas.²⁷ For Lazzarato, Tarde's public, defined by 'action at a distance', is a theoretical precursor to Deleuze's theory of control; in each case, the spatial openness, the turn from the confined space of prisons, factories, and schools, is met with a corresponding turn inward by technologies of power, towards memory and subjectivity.²⁸ The indirect and open nature of the technologies of the public, especially when compared to the panopticon or prison, their action at a distance obscures the fact that what they act on, beliefs, habits, and desires, define the very interiority of subjectivity. It is a trajectory of virtualisation in which power moves from directly restricting actions, the chains and bars of a prison; through actions on actions, as in the subject of the panopticon; and ultimately to the general context of action, the memory of a past and sense of a future. This difference is at once technological, as the capacity to act on beliefs and desires is increased through television and radio, but it is also the fact that these technologies act less and less on the present, what should be done now, than on memory, defining the sense of self and history, and on the future, defining what can be done and imagined. 'They are conducts on conducts, action on possible actions'.²⁹ The object of this power is simultaneously more abstract and more encompassing. This action at a distance on thoughts, beliefs, and habits, defines what Lazzarato calls 'noopolitics'. Noopolitics is a politics that acts on and through ideas, beliefs, and habits.³⁰

It is not just politics (states and other institutions) that demand the control over hearts and minds, but the very functioning of capital as well. This hap-

25 Lazzarato 2002, p. 23, and Tarde 1922, p. vi.

26 Lazzarato 2002, p. 279.

27 Lazzarato 2004, p. 97.

28 Deleuze 1995, p. 182.

29 Lazzarato 2004, p. 103.

30 Lazzarato 2004, p. 85.

pens in three fundamental ways. First, as capitalism increasingly becomes a consumer society, producing goods and services that exceed the reproduction of physical existence, it needs to produce the subjectivities that desire, require, and demand such commodities.³¹ Consumer society is dependent upon the industries of advertising and consumer relations that produce and circulate the beliefs and ideas that are the necessary condition for consumption. The noopolitical dimension of the economy is not just limited to consumption, to the world of advertising and marketing, however. As Lazzarato argues, financial capital, especially the financial aspects that pass through the stock markets, are as much dependent upon belief and desire as consumption. The values of stocks rise and fall with perceptions about their future value, as well as the well-being of the economy in general.³² Finally, it could be argued that production is as much dependent upon noopolitics, on the control of belief and desires, as consumption and finance. This was perhaps always the case and could be understood as a definition of ideology, but, as Lazzarato argues (and as we have already seen with Lordon's discussion of neoliberalism), the more production is disseminated throughout society, the less it can depend upon the walls and structures of the factory for discipline. The worker of contemporary society must increasingly become an entrepreneur of the self, and most completely identify with the demands of capital.³³ He or she must become his or her own boss, not in terms of autonomy but in terms of increasingly interiorised relation of command. Consumer society, financialisation, and neoliberalism are all economic changes that, in different ways, reveal the necessity of noopolitics, of the production of belief and desires, to the economy, the production of things.

Lazzarato's definition of noopolitics is framed between a reading of Tarde's *Psychologie Économique* and an examination of contemporary society through Deleuze's concept of control. As such it is caught between a general ontological perspective, one that posits society, every society, as defined by the primacy of transindividual relations of imitation and invention, and a more historicised but not necessarily historical argument, that holds that contemporary capitalism, defined by consumerism, financialisation, and neoliberal restructuring of the labour process, is increasingly dependent upon the noopolitical dimension of belief. This division runs through Lazzarato's multiple books on Tarde and contemporary capitalism. *Puissance de l'invention*, dedicated as it is to a crit-

31 Lazzarato 2004, p. 107.

32 Lazzarato 2004, p. 112.

33 Lazzarato 2012, p. 37.

ical excavation of Tarde's work on psychological economy, takes up the latter's perspective that Marx's critique of political economy, a critique that focused on the exploitation of labour, needs to be situated within a larger economy, the economy of habits, imitations, and belief, which both condition the productive power of labour and provide the necessary precondition of consumption. In some sense it is a kind of inversion of Marx's base and superstructure. Rather than understanding the superstructure, the realm of ideas, beliefs, and practices, as resting on a base of production, the production of things, Lazzarato argues that we have to reverse the topology, understanding the base as resting on the superstructure.³⁴ This is a claim that Lazzarato makes about any society, any economy. However, Lazzarato finds this also to be the basis for Tarde's surprising timeliness. What Tarde posited as a general theoretical objection to Marx and Smith, the idea that there is a diffuse network of imitation and adoption that necessarily pre-exists any division of labour, and a production of beliefs, desires, and subjectivity, that is the precondition of any production, turns out to be an idea which is increasingly realised in the contemporary economy; the three transformations that broadly go under the name of consumerism, financialisation, and neoliberalism, can each be read in different ways to privilege the production of subjectivity, the dissemination of habits, beliefs, and ideas, over economic production, the production of things. Add to this the technological and political changes of the last century, all of which have only further extended the communication of habits, beliefs, and ideas that Tarde identified with the emergent technologies of print and radio, and we have the 'revolution of capitalism' that Lazzarato is arguing for. Thus, Tarde is presented as offering both an alternative account of social relations, a conception of the multiplicity of imitations that displaces any individualistic or dialectical account of social relations, and a philosopher whose particular untimely insights have only now found their material and social conditions.

This ambiguity with respect to the ontological and historical dimension of Tarde's thought also bears on another, much more important, point of distinction, the relationship between noopolitics and the 'psychological economy', between the political dimension of the relationship between ideas, habits, and imitations, that which is oriented towards political order and authority, and the economic dimension, that which produces value. At times Lazzarato seems to argue that this division itself is out of date, reflecting a bygone political structure predicated on command, and a bygone economic relation predic-

34 Lazzarato 2002, p. 28.

ated on the uniform exploitation of labour.³⁵ As Lazzarato argues, 'Economic production and the production of subjectivity, labour and ethics, are indissociable'.³⁶ Within this interweaving of the political and economic there is a certain primacy of the political over the economic. Which is perhaps why Lazzarato uses one term, 'noopolitics', for both. It is the political that takes precedence. The political is the non-economic condition of economic exploitation.

Like Virno and Stiegler, Lazzarato insists on an immediate identity between economy and the production of subjectivity. Changes of production and consumption directly transform the conditions for subjectivation or individuation without passing through the superstructure of law or culture. Moreover, this production of subjectivity is transindividual, encompassing such extra-personal dimensions as machinic, social, and technological systems, and pre-individual, encompassing affects and intensities.³⁷ As with Virno and Stiegler, there is ambiguity with respect to both the unity and determination of the production of subjectivity. Simondon's objections to Marx seem oddly pertinent here. Given the multiple factors of the subjectivity, affects, language, and habits, and the multiple factors of its production from technology, to the economy and politics, to what extent does it make sense to speak of a production of subjectivity? A similar question could be raised with respect to determination. To what extent does positing subjectivity as a necessary effect and condition of the economy risk flipping a materialist analysis of subjection into a kind of subjective determination, in which subjectivity becomes the determining instance?

Lazzarato's most focused study on the relation of the noopolitical conditions of the economy is a little book on debt, titled *The Making of Indebted Man*. This book has the merit of being an actual application of Lazzarato's perspective to a specific problem and is thus freed from the polemics that defined his earlier books. He is no longer arguing for Tarde against Marx, but instead is using his general perspective, a perspective that combines Marx and Deleuze (among others) to address a specific political and economic situation. The situation in question is the rise of debt, specifically student debt and personal debt, in the contemporary economy. Debt has an obvious economic function, or functions, since there are several kinds of debt, and several relations defined by debt. It is part of the general financialisation of existence, providing sources of revenue that are not derived from production. As debt pushes the costs of such social services as education and health onto citizens, it is also part of the general

35 Lazzarato 2009, p. 119.

36 Lazzarato 2012, p. 49.

37 Lazzarato 2014, p. 57.

political strategy to reduce taxes, converting public goods into private risk. This transformation of the funding of education also has effects on subjectivity, and it is this element that Lazzarato emphasises.

As much as debt might create revenue, or reduce taxes, it also produces subjectivity. The individual under debt is one whose actions, past, present and future, are viewed through a lens shaped by debt, through the anxiety and fear of paying off one's debts in the future. Thus the most uncertain, most immaterial, aspect of life, ideas and beliefs about the future, come to have material effects on the present. Debt becomes part of the present precisely because it is an idea about the future. The transformation of education and healthcare from collective goods, funded by taxation, to individual goods, destroys any collective sense that they might possess. They cease to be collective goods and social rights, becoming subject to individual strategies of risk and gain. Debt is a production of highly individuated subjectivity. As Lazzarato argues:

The debt economy, then, is characterized by a twofold expansion of the exploitation of subjectivity: extensive (since not only are industrial work and tertiary sector concerned but every activity and condition) and intensive (since it encompasses the relationship to the self, in the guise of the entrepreneur of the self – who is at once responsible for 'his capital and guilty of poor management – whose paradigm is the "unemployed"').³⁸

To this isolation and individuation of the calculating subject, the entrepreneur of the self, there is the moralism of debt. Debt is not just an economic relation, nor is it simply a production of subjectivity; it is overcoded by the moral language of guilt. Paying debts is not only a valid economic strategy, but is viewed as morally right. Lazzarato's point, like that of David Graeber, is in some sense the reverse of Nietzsche.³⁹ Whereas Nietzsche famously argued that the ethical or spiritual idea of guilt is, at its basis, a relation of debt, of owing something to the one wronged, and thus to the community, Lazzarato argues that debt, an economic relation of risk, is thoroughly moralised.⁴⁰ To not pay one's debts is to violate not only the terms of the economic relation, but also one's moral and ethical standing as well.

While the noopolitics of debt individualises, subjecting each individual to their personal debt, and to a morality of obligation, the economics of debt does

38 Lazzarato 2012, p. 52.

39 Graeber 2011, p. 78.

40 Lazzarato 2012, p. 42.

not work on the individual level at all. Lazzarato draws from Deleuze's concept of the *dividual* to underscore the fact that debt, as it is produced, quantified, and eventually sold or transferred, is not sold as individual debt but rather as something that is at once more than the individual, as mortgages, debts, and securities are bundled, and less than the individual, as debt or one's credit score does not bear on one's individuality as such, but only on a part of it, a packet of salient information. The *dividual* can be understood as a transformation of both poles of the *transindividual* relation, transforming both individual and collective. As Deleuze argues, 'Individuals have become "dividuals" as samples, data, markets, or "banks"'.⁴¹ The *dividual* is situated beyond the binary of mass and individual that frames disciplinary power. As Yves Citton argues, this exploitation of the *dividual* can be understood as a third form of the production of subjectivity, situated alongside Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'social subjection' and 'machinic enslavement'.⁴² Whereas the former interpellated the individual as autonomous, treating him or her as possessor of the tool and subjectivity, and the latter makes the individual part of the functioning of the machine, the *dividuals* of debt, the calculations of a credit score, deal with parts and fragments that have been aggregated into groups that are not collectives. The same could be said for other aspects of the contemporary economy beyond debt: the production of data through the use of social networking and search engines, as well as consumer data through shopping, functions less as an individual product, or even a collective endeavour, than the production of information that only functions across fragments and parts of identities.⁴³ The information that guides searches and attention online is *dividual*; while it is drawn from individual searches, it only functions once those searches have been stripped of certain identifying characteristics and assembled into clusters. The *dividual* nature of debt and information production makes it incredibly difficult for individuals to grasp or identify with their collective condition. Unlike the 'machinic enslavement' of wage labour, there is not even a spatial and temporal condition that brings individuals together under the same roof. If, as Stiegler argues, modern technology makes it difficult to say 'we', this is especially true of the *dividuals* of debt and information production.

Returning to debt, we can see that this divide between individuation, the economic, moral, and political production of a highly individuated subject, and *dividuation*, the use of fragmented components and aggregates of data to

41 Deleuze 1995, p. 180.

42 Citton 2012a, p. 71.

43 Terranova 2010, p. 158.

generate wealth, can be understood as a revisiting of Marx's divide between the 'sphere of circulation' and 'the hidden abode of production'. In Marx's account, the former produced the individuated, isolated subject of market relations, while the latter produced, and made productive, the collective species-being of humankind. As much as this distinction crosses the same divide, debt is highly individuated and debt is rendered productive, or at least valuable, only at the point where it exceeds the individual to include the bundled debts of others, it also undoes the division between consumption and production. The subject of debt is rendered productive through the individuation of his or her responsibilities and actions. Debt individuates, but its individuation renders the subject productive, forcing her to maximise her energies and activities to realise market value. Second, while Marx already argued that the collective species activity is in some sense misrecognised, appearing as the productive power of capital itself, the spatial and temporal proximity of production on the factory floor at least made it possible for individuals to recognise their collective productive power. Debt utterly transforms this, obscuring both the wealth that debt creates and its status as a collective condition. The hidden abode of production is even hidden from those who participate in it.⁴⁴

The individuation of the subject of debt can be grasped as a way of understanding the articulation of noopolitics and economics, not just in the sense that it deals with the non-economic conditions of economic exploitation, the beliefs, ideas, and fears, but because it passes through the political terrain of the intersection between ethical work and collective belonging.⁴⁵ The moral imperative to pay one's debts passes through the idea of the nation and political belonging, of being an upstanding individual and citizen who pays one's debts. The moralisation of debt does not just affect the general imperative to pay, but also includes the various different forms of debt, as the debts of homeowners, students, and consumers are subject to different degrees of moral blame and evaluation.⁴⁶ The politics of debt, the manner in which it individuates and controls behaviour, functions as a precondition for economic exploitation. It is a contemporary ideology of productivity, one no longer indexed to the affective dimension of hope, but of fear. This political (and ethical) dimension is not directly productive; it is the precondition for a higher degree of economic exploitation. There is a politics and an economics of debt: politically it produces subjects capable and willing to labour even as the incentives of a vibrant

44 Hardt and Negri 2012, p. 15.

45 Lazzarato 2012, p. 53.

46 Lazzarato 2012, p. 30.

consumer culture dissipate, while economically it makes it possible to extract wealth from every relation, from the reproduction of existence.

Lazzarato's emphasis on the political and economic dimensions of the production of subjectivity, noopolitics and nooeconomics, makes it possible for him to underscore the political aspect of certain transformations of the economy beyond the figure of debt. Financialisation is not just an economic transformation, but is also a transformation of the production of subjectivity. Lazzarato argues that the various economic relations, from the wage to stock options, must be understood in terms of both their economic relation, their relation to both productivity and its measure, and in terms of their noopolitical dimension. Lazzarato offers a brief history of the manner in which productivity is measured, from wages to stock options, viewing each economic institution as much in terms of the subjectivity it produces as the way in which it measures production. To some extent, the idea of the wage as a production of subjectivity, as a particular kind of individuation, can be traced back to Marx, for whom the terrain of 'freedom, equality, and Bentham', was in part produced by the wage, by the fiction that labour power was a commodity like any other, paid for at full price. The wage individuates and interpellates workers as individual sellers of labour power.⁴⁷ What Lazzarato stresses is the manner in which the wage constitutes a kind of majority, the way that it functions to recognise productive activity while simultaneously exploiting it. Lazzarato's remarks on this point draw on Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between majority and minority. For Deleuze and Guattari, the majority is less a simple statistical count, a matter of more or less, than a standard that measures deviations. As Deleuze and Guattari write,

Majority implies a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it. Let us suppose that the constant or standard is the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language. It is obvious that 'man' holds the majority even if he is less numerous than mosquitos, children, women, blacks, peasants, homosexuals, etc. That is because he appears twice, once in the constant and again in the variable from which the constant is extracted.⁴⁸

Lazzarato's argument that the wage constitutes a 'majoritarian standard' draws as much from examinations of labour outside of the wage form as it does from

47 Althusser 1995, p. 67.

48 Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 105.

Deleuze and Guattari. Unstated but important in this regard is the work of Marxist feminists, such as Silvia Federici, Mariorosa Dalla Costa, and Selma James, who argue that as much as the wage is at the base of capitalist exploitation, concealing it in the image of full compensation for work performed, it also conceals the unwaged reproductive work of childcare, cleaning, and countless other domestic tasks that have been naturalised as 'women's work'. To have a wage is to have one's work recognised as productive, as social, as something that can be contested and changed; to be unwaged is to work invisibly.⁴⁹ Lazzarato is not explicitly concerned with the invisible labour of housework, but extends this general point to encompass the intermittently employed, and everyone who is exploited without being subject to the wage.⁵⁰ Tarde's emphasis on the productive nature of imitation and invention, which exceed the labour process, spilling beyond the factory or firm, needs to be supplemented by a critical theory of the way in which different productive and reproductive activities are represented and measured.

For Lazzarato, the wage, just as any other economic measure, such as debt or stock prices, must be understood in terms of its economic function, its relation to exploitation, and its production of subjectivity. As Lazzarato writes,

Capital, therefore, does not simply extort an extension of labor time (the difference between paid human time and human time spent at the workplace), it initiates a process that exploits the difference between subjection and enslavement. For if subjective subjection – the social alienation inherent to a particular job or any social function (worker, unemployed, teacher, etc.) – is always assignable and measurable (the wage appropriate to one's position, the salary appropriate to a social function), the part of machinic enslavement constituting actual production is never assignable nor quantifiable as such.⁵¹

The wage addresses or interpellates an individual worker, offering an imaginary representation of their individual social contribution. In contrast to this measure, production, as Marx argued, exploits transindividual productive capacities. While Lazzarato argues that this transindividual capacity is not quantifiable as such, following Negri's argument regarding the immeasurable nature of value, the two theses do not necessarily imply each other. It is possible to

49 Federici 2012, p. 16.

50 Lazzarato 2004, p. 237.

51 Lazzarato 2014, p. 45.

bracket the argument regarding the unquantifiable nature of value production in contemporary capitalism to simply assert that there is a division between the measure and representation of productivity presented to workers, and that wages fail to represent the productive nature of the necessarily transindividual relations of production and reproduction.⁵² Social subjection and machinic enslavement become not two different epochs, or even two different modes of subjection, but two different individuations acting on the same subjects, or processes of subjection, in different ways. The one affects subjectivity and identity insofar as it is signified, represented, and conceptualised; the other works at the level of gestures, affects, and actions.⁵³ The division between subjection and enslavement thus extends and complicates Marx's division between the sphere of exchange and the hidden abode of production, dividing it less between two spheres than between two different elements affecting the same process, the same workers. Workers are subjectified as individual wage earners, even as part of the company, but are enslaved as collective bodies and transformations.

Lazzarato's displacement of the problem of exploitation with that of the representation or calculation of production raises the question of their points of proximity and overlap.⁵⁴ Marx's definition of the proletariat as that which 'is in, but not of,' civil society framed exploitation as an exclusion from the major, from the dominant, representation of the social order.⁵⁵ On top of this, Marx also argued that unemployment, the reserve army of the unemployed, functioned as an internalised outside to capitalism, and production. This 'reserve army' functioned to drive down wages, and was thus an integral part of the exploitation of labour. However, it is at this point that we have to raise the issue that not all outsides are considered equal, not all becoming minor are the same. There is a difference between the unemployment of a casualised or precarious worker, whose period of unemployment has a disciplinary function,

52 Negri 1996b, p. 159.

53 Lazzarato 2014, p. 39.

54 Sibertin-Blanc 2013, p. 207.

55 It is perhaps Alain Badiou who has done the most to draw out Marx's analysis as one of the representation, or presentation, of the proletariat. For Badiou, the proletariat is precisely that which does not count, which is not included within the dominant representation of society. As Badiou writes, 'The vast analytic constructions of Capital are the retroactive foundation of what for him was pre-predicative evidence: that modern politics could not be formulated, even as hypothesis, otherwise than by proposing an interpretation in subject of these astounding hysterias of the social in which workers named the hidden void of the capitalist situation, by naming their own unrepresentation' (Badiou 2006, p. 176).

becoming the time of networking and job training, and that of individuals and collectives that are situated outside of zones of development and exploitation, between the excess of a given labour market and those rendered expendable by the global flows of capital.⁵⁶ The labours of reproduction and production, from housework to the knowledge economy, are included in their exclusion precisely through their temporal and spatial proximity to wage labour. However, even those who are completely excluded, left to squalor in the vast underdeveloped zones of the globe, are not outside in the sense of being able to create a new existence outside of capitalism.⁵⁷ There are no new territories, no new worlds to set off to, as the world is part of the same global market. As Balibar argues, 'At the moment at which humankind becomes economically and, to some extent, culturally "united", it is violently divided "biopolitically"'.⁵⁸ It is possible to argue that these outsides are interior as well, functioning as either ideological justifications for capitalism, the 'here be dragons' that demarcate the map of political and social possibilities, or as zones of production of the illicit commodities of the various black markets, but such argument exceeds the boundaries of the current project.

The critique of the wage as a majoritarian standard is in some sense a retrospective critique. As much as it is possible to argue that the wage, as a focus for working-class organisation, excluded as much as it organised, excluding the entire terrain of reproductive labour from struggle, Lazzarato is more interested in addressing its contemporary displacement. The wage was always ambivalently situated between interpellation and exclusion, recognition of labour and the effacement of exploitation, and as such it made possible a contestation of the social order, even if this contestation was entirely dictated by a dualism of capital versus workers. It is precisely this antagonistic division that is being undermined in contemporary capitalism. As workers increasingly become investors, subject to their investments as much as the wage, even this antagonistic dimension is lost. As Lazzarato argues, 'The workers are caught in a relation of exploitation when they sell their labour power to an entrepreneur, but they are implicated within a majoritarian dynamic when, for example, their revenue is invested in pension funds'.⁵⁹ Stock price, or the value of the stock market in general, becomes a strategy for breaking the antagonist dimension of the wage. As far as workers are encouraged to see themselves as investors, both in terms of their own labour power and as investors of their revenue, they

56 Ogilvie 2012, p. 72.

57 Jameson 2011, p. 147.

58 Balibar 2004, p. 131.

59 Lazzarato 2004, p. 241, my translation.

also increasingly identify their needs, their desires, with that of the company. The value of stocks, the rise and fall of various indicators and national markets, has become synonymous with the economy in general.

To conclude with a final ambiguity, Lazzarato presents his noopolitics, and his understanding of Tarde's economic psychology, as something that presents a radical alternative to Marx. Contrary to Marx, the source and site of productive activity is not labour power or the factory, but the general relations of invention, adoption, and imitation that define social existence. These relations produce the desires and attitudes that make consumer goods possible, the belief and confidence that makes investment possible, and the subjection that make the neoliberal worker possible. Capitalism has produced its own 'inverted world' in which it is no longer the base that is productive, but what used to be called the superstructure. However, this inversion, this positing of the exteriority of the economy to itself, is constantly transformed into interiority, a point that is made increasingly clear as Lazzarato shifts his analysis from the general points regarding the role of knowledge, of the social brain in production, to the specifics of contemporary capitalism, such as debt and financialisation. With respect to the latter, we see that what Lazzarato calls noopolitics, the transmission, reproduction, and imitation of habits, perceptions, and beliefs, is economically productive precisely because it functions as the precondition of economic production. Noopolitics produces the subject that is necessary and functional for the contemporary economy. While debt might function to reduce tax burdens, shifting the costs of education and health onto individuals, and to produce financial revenue from these same basic and fundamental services, one of its primary functions is to produce a subject that is sufficiently docile and co-operative, a subject that lives under the constant threat of debt. Debt is a practice on the self; it channels desires, activities, and habits towards that which would be most productive for capital, turning every student into a business student and tying every individual to their job.

In a similar manner, financialisation transforms the subject of labour power, the working class. Wages remain the ambivalent condition of recognition and exploitation, counting diverse forms of labour as socially valid while at the same time extracting more value than can be paid for, but this representation of economic activity is displaced by individual retirement funds, stocks, and investment. As Lazzarato writes, 'The economic exploitation of workers is as real as their participation in the financial majority'.⁶⁰ These new representations of the economy have two primary effects. First, they tend to diminish the

60 Lazzarato 2004, p. 242.

antagonistic relationship between labour and capital, producing the paradoxical effect that workers are more concerned about their company's stock price than their salary. Second, they continue the bewitched world of capitalism, in which value is generated from value, concealing the role of labour in the process. The combined effect of these two tendencies at the level of noopolitics, at the level of the production of belief and desire, is an increased identification and subjection to capital. What is effaced from social belonging is labour, and with it the economic value of one's debts, and in failing to see these things, and failing to recognise them, all that remains is the world of capital's own seemingly perpetual self-valorisation. As Deleuze and Guattari write, 'Desire of the most disadvantaged creature will invest with all its strength, irrespective of any economic understanding or lack of it, the capitalist social field as a whole'.⁶¹

Ultimately, it can be argued that noopolitics is less a matter of positing some entirely other conceptualisation of the economy, as was the case for Tarde's economic psychology, than it is of grasping the transindividual production of subjectivity as the political condition and effect of economic exploitation. For Lazzarato, noopolitics is both the non-economic condition of the economy and the subjective effect of economic processes. This dimension of noopolitics, its status as something of a supplement to a critique of political economy, is in direct contradiction with another aspect of Lazzarato's thought, however; namely his critique of the Marxist tendency to reduce the production of subjectivity to the mode of production.⁶² While it is possible to differentiate these two aspects into either later or more recent works, or those that are engaging in theoretical polemic arguing for the importance of Tarde versus those concerned with theorisations of debt, neoliberalism, and finance, with existing capitalism, it is also possible, and more productive, to understand this contradiction as reflecting a tension between unity and multiplicity with respect to transindividuality. In other words, it is a question of whether transindividuation can simply be referred to one particular cause, in this case the economy, or whether it must itself embrace multiple causes and relations. To what extent must transindividuality itself be thought of as a relation of relations?

61 Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 229.

62 Lazzarato 2004, p. 62.

Short-Circuits: The Politics and Economics of Transindividuality

The contradiction between Stiegler's and Virno's critical understandings of the intersection between capitalism and transindividuation considered in the previous chapter raises the question not only of how is it possible to reconcile their two perspectives – besides in some schizophrenic picture of the present combining productive intelligence and consumed stupidity – but also more importantly of how to grasp multiple and intersecting individuations. This is a question not only of the relation between production and consumption, which Hegel and Marx saw as producing two different individuations, but between the individuations produced by economic relations, production, consumption, and the wage relation, and those produced by various political forms of belonging, from imaginary communities of race and nation, to the institutional constitution of citizenship and law. This is a question of how they cohere in the present, how an individual can be both an employee and a citizen, or a consumer and a worker, subject to different affects, knowledge, and memories. Once again these questions can be traced back to Hegel and Marx; the former's *Philosophy of Right* and the latter's writings from 'On the Jewish Question' on have constituted different attempts to reconcile the conflicting individuations animating political, social, and economic life. Whereas Hegel and Marx posited a dialectic between civil society and the state, the sphere of exchange and the hidden abode of production, it is now a matter of thinking the constitutive complexity of the different individuations. It is also a question of history, and historicity: how do individuals inhabit a present that is defined as much by remnants and memories of past individuations as it is by transformations, political, economic, and technical, of current individuations? Viewed differently, it is a question of how the different pre-individual aspects of individuation relate to and intersect with each other at a given moment and in a given collective or given individual. As we have seen, affect, imagination, knowledge, and habits can all be considered pre-individual conditions of subjectivity and a basis of transindividual relations. However, they do not necessarily affect or determine each other, and necessarily have radically different conditions of dissemination and communication, travelling through different technologies and relations.

Irreducible Limits: Individuation is Always Actual

Situated between the various political and economic understandings of trans-individuation considered in the previous chapter, an important question lingers: can individuation be understood to be the effect of a singular structure or relation? This question underlies the opposition between Stiegler and Virno, who ascribe consumption or the changes in production determining power in the constitution of a new individuation. The former goes so far as to argue that hypercapitalism constitutes the basis for disindividuation, which only intensifies the question. Can one instance of relation completely determine or destroy the conditions of individuation? This is a question that is at once ontological, combining the relation of effects and causes; anthropological, opening up the question of some irreducible and unchangeable humanity; and political, opening up the question of resistance. These different dimensions of the question can be aligned, as is often the case when some idea of an unchanging human essence is understood as the necessary cause of political emancipation. This is the implicit structure of every humanism. Just because it is possible to understand the relation in such a linear and unproblematic dimension does not mean that it only functions in such a way. As we have seen, what is at stake in transindividuality is a rethinking of the relation between the anthropological and institutional dimensions of existence, between the supposed essence of humanity and its historical articulation. Thus, it is possible to suggest that what transindividuality makes possible, along with a rethinking of the relation between individual and society, is a new way of conceiving the relation between determination and liberation. The persistent myth that individuation can only be a separation from collectivity, from any group or relation, is doubled by the idea that agency, the capacity to act, must be predicated on something, some essence, that is prior to or outside of its determination by social and political conditions. The connection between the two conceptualisations, or imaginations, can be readily seen in the intersecting images of the free-thinking individual and the conforming crowd. The idea of transindividuality is perhaps as destructive of the former as it is of the latter, cutting through the persistent image of collective conformity and individual autonomy.

Stiegler and Spinoza offer an interesting test case for examining the relationship between determination and liberation. As I have already noted, Stiegler and Spinoza each begin from an idea of the irreducible singularity of interpretation, a singularity grounded on historicity, on the relations and encounters that have defined the ground for an interpretation; in other words, a singularity grounded on transindividuality. The philosophical basis for this claim differs in each thinker; Stiegler draws on Husserl's primary and secondary retentions,

while Spinoza develops an ontology of bodies which is also a semiology of signs. In each case, past memories condition future memories or retentions.¹ What Stiegler identifies as singularisation, or what Spinoza calls character or 'ingenium', is the assertion that every experience, every interpretation, rests on the ground of experiences, previous interpretations; the singular is the changing ground of relations that is actively interpreting, making connections, as much as it is subject to its history of relations. What makes this anthropology political is the claim, shared by Spinoza and Stiegler, that every political organisation must be understood as an organisation of not only signs, but also the conditions of their interpretation. The meaning of signs is conditioned by their encounter, hence the demand to regulate encounters. At the extreme point of this process are those forms of political power that seek to destroy these singular interpretations, homogenising all future interpretations. For Stiegler, this loss of individuation is located in the consumerism of contemporary capitalism, while Spinoza identified it with superstition, with the attempt to rule through the control of religious doctrine.

Spinoza and Stiegler differ as to whether or not disindividuation is an actual possibility. As Spinoza argued, such an attempt to rule the masses through superstition encountered the unavoidable obstacle of the singular constitution of imaginations and desires.² Spinoza offers an argument for a materialist irreducibility of power: it is impossible for individuals to transfer their right to the sovereign, even less are they able to control their minds and tongues. Superstition, as Spinoza defines it, is an attempt to ground a political community, a state or nation, entirely on the imagination or affects. As such it constitutes an unstable ground, always subject to the varieties of experience and imagination that are shaped differently for each particular individual. The centripetal force of a dominant imaginary confronts the irreducible centrifugal force of singular encounters. It is possible to see this difference as simply the difference of history. The politics of superstition is always predicated on the restriction of the interpretation of sacred texts; as such it was rather limited in its ability to standardise experiences and interpretations. In contrast to this, Stiegler argues that the temporal objects in societies of contemporary capitalism have an unprecedented ability to structure secondary and tertiary retentions. It is possible to interpret the philosophical difference between Spinoza and Stiegler as simply the difference of history and technology, the four hundred years that separates them is nothing other than a perfection of the technology of control.

1 Vinciguerra 2005, p. 227.

2 Citton 2010, p. 79.

The noopolitics of control have taken great strides since Spinoza's time; there are simply more ways to structure memory and experience than control over interpretations of scripture. However, as much as it is possible to see a difference of history underlying the transition from superstition to control, there is an ontological one, predicated on two different understandings of transindividuality.

A certain political and ontological primacy of an irreducible striving and struggle characterises Spinoza's thought. The assertion that everything strives in its attempts to preserve its being has as its political corollary Spinoza's assertion that right is inalienable. As he states in the opening of the *Theological-Political Treatise*:

I begin with the natural right of the individual; this is coextensive with the individual's desire and power. Nobody is bound by natural right to live as another pleases, each being the guardian of his own freedom ... [S]ince nobody can deprive himself of the power of self-defence as to cease to be a human being, I conclude that nobody can be absolutely deprived of his natural rights, and that by a quasi-natural right subjects do retain some rights which cannot be taken from them without imperilling the state, and which therefore are either tacitly conceded or explicitly agreed by the rulers.³

There is a physical dimension to this political assertion: natural right is preserved, which is to say it cannot be transferred, because right is power, the forces and abilities of the mind and body, and one cannot transfer power. Power has no existence outside of the singularity of minds and bodies that express it. The corollary of this is that one cannot transfer one's ability to interpret, to individuate, memories and imagination. That one should not think differently, or hold one's tongue when one does so, is as much a matter of physics as it is a matter of rights, and it is the physics of forces that forms the basis of a political anthropology. Only animals or automatons are capable of uniformly thinking the same and expressing the same.⁴ Humans have more complex bodies, more varied encounters, which means that they yield irreducibly singular interpretations and striving. This, Spinoza argues, is the limit of any attempt to ground power on the articulation of the imagination. There is, however, a second basis for the commonality of thought and interpretation in Spinoza's thought, one

3 Spinoza 1991, p. 7.

4 Bove 2012, p. 157.

found less in terms of a shared imagination than in the common notions, in such ideas as the mutual utility of human society. This commonality cannot be imposed through the imagination, through exterior conditions that would regulate interpretations and experiences, but must be actively produced by 'as many as possible, thinking as much as possible'.⁵ Politics is always framed by these two commonalities, these two foundations of the state – one passive, the other active.

The singularity of the imagination is grounded in Spinoza's understanding of the constitution of bodies and minds. Just as the affects of human beings are shaped by the encounters that form them, the persons and things that become objects of love and hate, so are the images, signs, and interpretations. We perceive the connections between things, at least initially according to the connections that are first presented to us. If we see Paul in the morning and Peter in the afternoon, then we will imagine Peter whenever we see Paul. The connections are made by the initial encounter of things, the spontaneous order of nature, but they are sustained by our own *conatus*, our own striving to persevere. The *conatus*, the striving that defines human life, is as much an irreducible force of interpretation, as it is existence.⁶ It is as much our striving that compels us to remember, to make connections between images and encounters, as it is any property of those images. There is not for Spinoza a rigorous distinction between the natural and artificial signs, between those that have some sort of internal connection and those that are the products of convention. Signs and images, the basic fundamental aspects of the imagination are all products of the same causal order, the same connections.

The singularity of the imagination is not without relation to the imagination of others. It is not a monad. It is not that there are radically different interpretations for every individual, in which the history of encounters left everyone in their own world of radically unique signs and images. This is for two reasons. First, the general causal connections that determine the imagination are something that everyone is subject to, constituting universal laws of causal relations. It is the same causal order of nature that determines the farmer and the soldier to make different connections with respect to hoof prints. As with Spinoza's logic of the affects, there is a combination of a common order and an existing multiplicity: it is because we are all subject to the same order, the same relation of connections, that we have radically different imaginations. This causal order is not just a relation between sign and thing, image and object,

⁵ Balibar 1998b, p. 98.

⁶ Vinciguerra 2005, p. 206.

in a general logic of association in which contiguity and proximity can associate anything with anything, but a relation between image, idea, and the conditions of interpretation. As Vinciguerra argues, Spinoza's idea of the imagination is not just one framed between sign and thing, but sign, thing, and individual conatus, the body and the mind that interprets.⁷ This general condition, that every interpretation is as much about the character, the ingenium, of the one that interprets as it is about the nature of the sign itself, frames the relation between the individual and society. As we have seen, for Spinoza, the ingenium, character or habit, not only defines the individual and the nation, it is also the ground of their transindividual relation.⁸ Connections between signs and images, the imagination, can be collective as much as they can be singular, a point that Spinoza reinforces in arguing that language is not radically distinct from any other connection between sign and image. The connection between the word apple, or *pomme*, to take Spinoza's example, and the fruit, a connection that makes language possible, is based on the same conjunction that grounds the idiosyncratic imagination that arrives at different associations from the same hoof print. Common associations are the basis for a common language.

Spinoza and Stiegler converge on a basic fundamental point that memory conditions experience, thus determining future memory. What I perceive, think, and feel (although this last point is stronger for Spinoza than it is for Stiegler) is structured and determined by what I have perceived; signs, traces, and images are the preconditions of future interpretations. They differ on a fundamental point, that of disindividuation. Spinoza cannot accept the possibility that any set of signs and images would become so powerful, so determining, as to completely condition future signs. Any attempt to completely condition future memories, future protentions, necessarily fails. This, for Spinoza, is the lesson of any theocracy, any state founded on superstition. Their difference here is perhaps not as strong as I first presented it. Stiegler understands a certain paradox of control, in which any attempt to completely control the memory and drives leads to a lack of control, breaking down individuation. Control is a politics that operates on those who no longer actively participate in their political individuation. As Stiegler writes, 'Society of control is the name of the social organization characterized by the loss of individuation as a loss of aesthetic participation and generalized proletarianization'.⁹ There is a fundamental paradox of control: it is through the attempt to control the entirety of

7 Vinciguerra 2005, p. 212.

8 Laux 1993, p. 11.

9 Stiegler 2005, p. 88, my translation.

individuation, to turn the entire process of adoption and individuation into the basis of marketing and consuming products, that control becomes impossible. What control undermines is the very possibility of authority, of any individuation framed in terms of tradition and belief. Spinoza understands this limit of control not to be one that destroys the conatus, but that confronts its irreducible singularity as its limit. Or, more precisely, we might say that the conatus is, as Lordon argues, structured and structuring; as such the particular way in which it marks the limit of control is in part determined by the nature of control itself. In place of Stiegler's binary of individuation and destruction, Spinoza presents a historical relation in which conditions and effects, structure and conatus, are always in a relation of identity and non-identity. There is never complete order or disorder, just the structuring and destructuring of different strivings, different orientations, and their institutions that are always simultaneously effect and causes.¹⁰

Stiegler's understanding of complete disindividuation, complete disorder, ultimately pushes him further than Spinoza in terms of a 'fear of the masses'. As much as Spinoza famously wrote that the 'mob is terrifying, if unafraid', seeming to align his thought with an elite fear of the crowd, this claim is undercut by two other theses (EIV54S). First, the very thing that defines the masses, their affects and imagination, are not unique to some sort of madness of crowds, but are constitutive of individual and collective existence.¹¹ Individuals and masses are defined by the same combinations of passivity and activity, imagination and reason. Second, the masses are reservoirs of collective intelligence, maintaining the shared sense of words, and, ultimately, the common notions.¹² In contrast to this, Stiegler's writing is haunted by a fear of the revolt of the masses, citing riots in the *banlieues* of Paris as a warning (the images of which illustrate the English translations of his books). For Stiegler, these are not nascent rebellions against an increasingly authoritarian austerity state, or spontaneous reappropriations of social surplus. Rather they are themselves symptoms of the general disindividuation of contemporary society; they are the actions of individuals who can neither control themselves nor be controlled. It is of course possible to argue that Stiegler has a positive sense of collectivity, or at least posits an ideal of the mutual constitution of an I that is a we and a we that is an I, of transindividuality. However, this transindividual individuation is less the mutual constitution of collective intelligence, as it is for Spinoza, than the

¹⁰ Lordon 2014, p. 138.

¹¹ Del Lucchese 2011, p. 152.

¹² Balibar 1994a, p. 36.

shared inheritance of a tradition. For Stiegler, society is necessarily defined by what it inherits, what it maintains of its past, and not what it produces as its future. The difference between Stiegler and Spinoza on this point recapitulates some of the difference between the former and Virno; in each case it is a difference between a politics which sees the inheritance of tradition as a necessary condition of political belonging and a politics of a common production of intelligence – one oriented towards the past, the other towards the future.

Despite this strong point of difference regarding the destruction of individuation, Stiegler and Spinoza converge around the destruction of intelligence. As we have seen, for Stiegler, the end point of the destruction of intelligence is the tendency for temporal objects to not only programme time, but to also destroy the temporal diachrony necessary to make sense. This tendency, which first manifests itself in the ability of film or television programmes to synchronise the different temporalities of their audience, culminates in the ability of contemporary media to present, and create, events in ‘real time’. As Stiegler argues,

When memory is produced at a speed near that of light it is no longer possible, either in law or in fact, to distinguish an ‘event’ from its ‘input’ or its ‘input’ from its ‘reception’ or reading: these three moments coincide in a single spatiotemporal reality such that all delay, all distance, between them, is eliminated – but so is all locality, since locality is constructed from differentiation, like calendarity and spatiality, and differentiation is therefore, from the outset what happens there.¹³

The immediacy of the event, the collapsing of any spatial or temporal distinction between its taking place, its transmission, and its reception, makes it nearly impossible to construct any sense from it. All one knows is that it is ‘breaking news’, the immediacy of its communication takes precedence over anything that is communicated, becoming more imperative the less anything is known. The paradigmatic image of this are the cameras fixated on some scene of a tragedy as the reporter reiterates the fact that ‘little is known at this time’.¹⁴ Nothing is communicated under the banner of ‘breaking news’ other than the supposed novelty of the event itself. At first glance this would seem to be the point where the historical distance between Spinoza and Stiegler would

¹³ Stiegler 201b, p. 116.

¹⁴ ‘There is now no time to assess a news story from a critical distance, because the reporter has to comment on the event “as it happens” (or even *before* it happens) and improvise to fill the space, using speculation or viewer-supplied material (the outsourcing of news) if necessary. This is the media equivalent of “looking busy”’ (Southwood 2011, p. 35).

be at its greatest: nothing that Spinoza could experience in the seventeenth century could approximate the experience of being subject to the overwhelming and stupefying experience of real-time television. However, if Spinoza lacks the technological conditions, he nevertheless examines a similar production of ignorance. Spinoza's critique of religion and theocracy as a reign of ignorance often returns to the way in which wonder and amazement function not as a precondition for knowledge (as for many philosophers), but their necessary interruption, or, to belabour the phrase, their short-circuit.¹⁵ This can be seen in the Appendix to Part One of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza contends with the teleological explanation of the death by falling tiles. As Spinoza attempts to offer causal explanation, stressing the universal forces of building decay, gravity, and shifting winds, his imagined interlocutor insists on the singular and miraculous event. The miracle is framed as that which cannot be explained through any causal connections, any general laws, and it perpetuates the ignorance it takes for granted. The exceptional and stupefying nature of the miraculous is contrasted with Spinoza's general assertion that the path to common notions, to knowledge, stems from a mind and body that have contemplated and experienced many things (E1IP29Schol). It is this ability to contemplate many things, even all at once, which makes it possible to see the common causal conditions in what is otherwise presented as a miracle.¹⁶ The miracle in its singularity, just as the event in its immediacy, stupefies, transfixes, rather than produces the condition of knowledge. The barrier to knowledge is less some original ignorance, or some inability to know, than the tendency to focus on the exceptional nature of what is presented, failing to see the connections and relations that produce it. Connections and relations reveal the common nature in the singular event, making it possible to move from awe to knowledge. Spinoza and Stiegler agree on this general point, on the necessity of producing and sustaining attention and intelligence against the forces that dissipate it.

The difference between Stiegler and Spinoza can be summed up by the latter's focus on the conatus, by the active striving, which Spinoza sees as infinitely malleable, but nonetheless consistent.¹⁷ Spinoza acknowledges that the

15 Sévérac 2005, p. 251.

16 Sévérac 2005, p. 216.

17 Stiegler generally does not address Spinoza or the neo-Spinozist perspectives on the politics of the imagination. He does briefly address Frédéric Lordon's *Capitalisme, désir, et servitude* in *États de choc: Bêtise et savoir au XXI^e Siècle*. He argues against Lordon's central claim, namely that social relations can be understood as a matter of the colinearisation of an individual's conatus and the general striving of society. Stiegler argues that this conatus cannot be called desire, because desire presupposes individuation; it is always the desire

conatus of an individual undergoes radical changes, transformations from imagination to knowledge, from an infant to an adult, even going so far as to argue that these changes exceed even mortality.¹⁸ Bodies and minds continue to change and be transformed throughout life and beyond. These changes cannot be described as a loss or destruction of this particular striving. In contrast to this, Stiegler understands the possibility of a radical disindividuation through contemporary technology. The differences here are as much ontological as they are historical or technological. Spinoza's thought begins from the premise that God is nature, that the infinite causal power of the universe is immanent to its order and connection. Thus the striving of the finite individual, its particular conatus, while limited, participates in this infinite causal power.¹⁹ This power does not just encompass rationality, but even the interpretations of the imagination have a constitutive dimension that constructs the world. The irreducibility of the conatus is the corollary of its ontologically affirmative dimension.²⁰ Or, put more accurately, it is not so much that the conatus is irreducible, as if the causal powers of imagination, affect, and the history of encounters cannot affect it; it is more accurate to say that these forces only act, only have effects on the conatus and history, if they become part of its striving. It is irreducible that it strives, but how and in what direction remains entirely determined by the history of relations. In sharp contrast to this, Stiegler begins with a radical break that separates man from nature and other beings: man is finite, subject to an initial default.²¹ The awareness of death cannot be separated from the tertiary memories, the grammatisations that are the pre-individual basis of individuation. Their very existence testifies to the nonexistence of those that have come before. The defining fact of humanity's initial prosthetic nature, of a memory record in objects, marks, and images, is the corollary of humankind's finitude. It is because we die that we both have and need a memory that exceeds us,

of an individual. Contemporary capitalism deals with drives taken in their fundamental fragmentation (Stiegler 2012, p. 280). Thus, Stiegler argues, with a bit of irony, that Spinoza cannot be understood as a bible for making sense of contemporary society.

- 18 'Sometimes a man undergoes such changes that I should hardly have said he was the same man. I have heard stories, for example, of a Spanish poet who suffered an illness; though he recovered, he was left so oblivious to his past life that he did not believe the tales and tragedies he had written were his own. He could surely have been taken for a grown-up infant if he had also forgotten his native language' (EIVP39S).
- 19 Vinciguerra 2005, p. 89.
- 20 Negri 1991b, p. 97.
- 21 Combes 2013, p. 69.

that we inherit.²² This originary finitude is the precondition of the constitution of individuation; it is because we inherit and inscribe memories that we individuate ourselves, but it is also the condition of its decomposition. Because we are constituted in and through a memory that exceeds our consciousness, we can be decomposed by a mechanisation and reproduction of that memory. The conditions of individuation are the conditions of disindividuation.

As much as these two perspectives can be differentiated along a purely speculative or ontological level, it is not clear that the ontological assertion has any definite effects on the level of political resistance. It would first appear that Spinoza's assertion of the irreducible singularity of the *conatus* posits an irreducible and unchanging force of resistance, and that Stiegler, on the other hand, sees individuation as completely destructible by the transformations of hypercapitalism. As we saw in *Excursus Two*, however, Spinoza's assertion of the irreducible *conatus* has as one of its fundamental provocations an attempt to answer the question as to 'why people fight for their servitude as if it were salvation'. The paradoxical answer to this question is that it is precisely because we actively strive to interpret the world according to inadequate ideas of our freedom and autonomy that we are subject to it. It is not just the imagination or the composition of our affects that constitutes the ground of servitude, but the way in which we strive in the face of our imagination and affective composition – interpreting our subjection as freedom. Of particular importance in this latter respect are the passive joyful affects, that is, joyful affects that we are not the cause of and that we do not control. As I argued, following Lordon and Sévérac, these joyful passive affects can be used to make sense of the pleasures of consumer society; consumer society inundates us with pleasures, joys, but it controls not only the production of these joys, objects of desire, but also their meaning and associations. In contrast to this, Stiegler offers an analysis of the malaise and discontent of consumer society, a malaise grounded in a loss of self, loss of individuation. Stiegler's theory is in some sense a theory of alienation, of a disindividuation that pervades consumer society. It is this revival of alienation that gives it its rhetorical force, drawing together the everyday frustrations of meaning and purpose in contemporary society with the pathologies that paint a disturbing picture of modern life. The underlying theme of Stiegler's analysis of the loss of individuation is the idea of a culture industry that destroys individuation through the imposition of a uniform memory on disparate individuals, making any individuation impossible. This uniformity exceeds the sort theorised by Horkheimer and Adorno; it no longer standard-

22 Stiegler 1998, p. 195.

ises the product, producing the mind-numbing repetition of the standard films and music, but instead completely reprogrammes the audience. It is precisely this sense of alienation that has been historically surpassed, not by a revolutionary transformation of social relations, but through a technological and economic transformation that privileges participation over conformity. Stiegler's understanding of the loss of knowledge, belief, and individuation, leaves him ill-suited to grasp the pleasures of consumer society. These pleasures, what Spinoza calls passive joyful affects, can perhaps explain the particular force and compulsion of contemporary capitalism. Subjection is defined by our joys as much as our sorrows.

As we have seen in Excursus Two, it is at this point where Spinoza's ontology, an ontology of active and passive joys, of striving and its determination, intersects, albeit obliquely, with Marx's critique of Hegel's conception of the passage from the partial perspective of civil society to the universality of the state. There is no easy passage from civil society to the state; there is no passage from the particularity of individual self-interest to that of a universal perspective because civil society, or more properly the capitalist mode of production, simultaneously naturalises its own existence while cultivating a strong identification (or colinearisation) with desire. People do not identify with the state and its structures, understood as necessary reflections and conditions of their individuation, but rather they identify through the medium of money, through capital itself. On this point it is possible to turn Hegel against Stiegler. As much as Stiegler argued that current proletarianisation has forever extinguished Hegel's ideal of the formation of revolutionary consciousness through work, Hegel's positing of a recognition or individuation through consumer society is perhaps even more timely than Hegel could know. The modern world, the world of consumer society, is one in which people recognise themselves less and less through the laws and structures of their state, and more and more in the world of consumer goods. As Jameson writes,

It is thus scarcely a distortion to posit the humanized world of consumer society as that externalization in which the subject can find itself most completely objectified and yet most completely itself. The contradiction begins to appear when we set this cultural dimension alongside the legal and political levels of late capitalism: for it is with these that the Kantian ethical citizen ought to identify himself, according to the theory, and in these that he ought to be able to recognize his own subjectivity and the traces of his own production. But this is precisely what does not obtain today; where so many people feel powerless in the face of the objective institutions which constitute their world, and in which they are so far

from identifying that legal and political world as their own doing and their own production.²³

Jameson's point here is not to celebrate this consumerist end of history, but to indicate that consumer society has more effectively harnessed the capacity for recognition than the state. Jameson is reading Hegel's dialectic of recognition through Marx's interruption, through commodity fetishism, but what is striking in this context is the way in which Jameson's reading would seem to demand an affective dimension. What people find in consumer society, what makes it humanised, is less the fact that it seems to reflect the interests of consumers, but rather that it reflects their desires, their joys. Consumer society is recognised, affirmed, because it addresses the affirmative dimension of existence, the passive joys of love and hope. As Lazzarato and Lordon argue, our capacity to identify with capital, commodities, and corporations rather than the institutions of the state and democracy stems from the ability of the former to address the passive joys, hopes, and desires rather than fears. Spinoza offers a second, equally powerful, explanation for the different affective relation to capital and the state, one that is ultimately aligned with Marx's theory of fetishism. As Spinoza argues, our affects are more intense, in terms of hatred and love, towards that which we imagine to be free than that which we think to be necessary. Free actions, actions that could be performed otherwise, will always generate more veneration and hostility than those that seem to be nothing other than an effect of a concatenation of causes. The fetishisation of the commodity, and the general reification of the economy, effectively naturalises the economy, making it a cause and never an effect of actions.²⁴ The more the economy is naturalised, the more it is depoliticised, the less it can prompt anger and indignation. The economy is perceived as a quality of things, a way of the world, and not the effects of actions. Finally, the putative complexity of the economy, the intersection of various factors from around the world, increases one's apparent freedom. The more complex the determinations, the easier it is to imagine oneself as autonomous, as not determined. The affective composition of capitalism is structured by a series of relations in which money appears as the universal equivalent of desire, the economy appears as a natural force, and the individual appears to be free. Passive joyful affects, naturalisation of the economy, and our apparently autonomous consent are more potent constitutions of our subjection than any loss of individuation.

²³ Jameson 2010, p. 112.

²⁴ Lordon 2014, p. 95.

It is at this point that Spinoza's temporal distance actually brings him paradoxically closer to the present organisation of desire and knowledge. The reification of the economy as something necessary, coupled with our inadequate idea of our freedom, leads to a tendency to affirm the very conditions of our subjection, finding affirmation in their limited conditions for existence. As Jonathan Crary writes,

Now there are numerous pressures for individuals to reimagine and refigure themselves as being of the same consistency and values as the dematerialized commodities and social connections in which they are immersed so extensively. Reification has proceeded to the point where the individual has to invent a self-understanding that optimizes or facilitates their participation in digital milieus and speeds.²⁵

Spinoza's passive activity, the *conatus* defined by passive joyful affects, is closer to the present imperative of interaction than Stiegler's disindividuation. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, it is through thinking the activity, the irreducible, singularity and striving of the *conatus*, rather than starting from an original default of finitude, that we can grasp the manner in which one fights for servitude as if it were salvation. It is because we cannot but interpret our existence, and are compelled to think in terms of those things that appear to increase our power, that we find ourselves necessarily affirming the condition of our own subjection. We actively constitute our own passivity, our narrow and prescribed ideas of our desires, based on what we believe we can actually achieve. It is not that we are alienated, cut off from our essence or potential, but rather that our very striving is fixated, defined by conditions that exceed it.²⁶ Captivation, capture, not alienation or disindividuation, constitute the terrain of our current subjection. The passive activity of contemporary consumer society cannot be confused with the activity that does not passively submit to external conditions but actively transforms them; joyful passive affects should not be confused with joyful active ones. Spinoza's politics is a matter of shifting from passive joys to active joys, but this can only be done by first recognising how much we participate and actively constitute our subjection.

Spinoza's general assertion that desire, the human essence, is always already actualised undermines not just any attempt to posit a destruction of individuation, but also any attempt to differentiate between potential and actual

²⁵ Crary 2013, p. 100.

²⁶ Lordon 2014, p. 145.

transindividuation. Spinoza's assertion that desire is man's very essence, an essence determined and defined by its history of affective relations, undermines not only any idea of alienation or disindividuation, but also any idea of a latent potential of subjectivity unrealised, and not actualised. This dimension of Spinoza's thought has been given its most forceful and pithy articulation by Vittorio Morfino, who writes: 'the multitude is a card that we cannot play twice'.²⁷ The specific target of Morfino's critique is Negri (or Hardt and Negri), who posits the multitude as existing first as a general ontological condition, *potentia* understood as the immanent organisation of forces, and second, as an actual historical product and goal, in a word, communism.²⁸ Morfino argues, like Sévérac, that Spinoza's concept of essence as always already determined, always already actualised by affects, imagination, and reason, means that the multitude cannot be placed outside history as an ontology, but must be thought in terms of its actually existing historical orientation.²⁹ Morfino's specific target here is the concept of the multitude, but it is possible to argue that it applies to the general concept of transindividuality, which also has to be posited as something always already organised and organising, as actively constituted rather than a potential or faculty.

On this reading, Virno's assertion of a potential social individual, or multitude, at work in the hidden abode of production is just as untenable. Despite the fact that Virno is much more careful in positing the ambivalence of this multitude, seeing it in the negative characteristics of cynicism and opportunism, there still is an unavoidable prefigurative dimension to his argument, the idea that there is a transindividual dimension of production which is in excess of its current organisation. Virno's assertion of a social individual hidden in the private sphere, of a general intellect that only requires a new public sphere in order to come into being, overlooks the manner in which subjectification, or individuation, permeates the hidden abode of production. This is another way of saying that those workers of the general intellect, whose knowledge and relations define the conditions of a new public, a new order, necessarily imagine or represent their own working conditions to themselves. How they do so is determined as much by the changes in ideas, in the constitution of the imagination as it passes through politics, as by changes in production. The site of production is never just the site of production, even the production of symbols, but is lived, which is to say, interpreted. This irreducible interpret-

²⁷ Morfino 2014, p. 16.

²⁸ Hardt and Negri 2004, p. 221.

²⁹ Morfino 2014, p. 10.

ation, a corollary of irreducible striving, necessarily carries with it the effects of other transindividuations, political, national, and so on. The hidden abode can no more hide from effects of other individuations, other constitutions of transindividuality, as its effects can be entirely shut off by a sign that reads 'no admittance except on business'. As Balibar writes:

The determining factor, the cause, is always at work *on the other scene* – that is, it intervenes through the mediation of its opposite. Such is the general form of the 'ruse of reason' (which is every bit as much the ruse of unreason): economic effects never themselves have economic causes, no more than symbolic effects have symbolic or ideological causes.³⁰

This logic of displacement, of the absent cause, can alternately be understood as a logic of individuation: the economy can only have effects if it is individuated in comportments, ways of being and thinking; conversely, ways of being and thinking, what Balibar calls symbolic or subjection, can only truly have any efficacy if they effect positions with respect to distribution and production of resources and power within society, or in a word, the economy.

Balibar's schema of production and subjection significantly complicates the simple assertion of economy or politics as the determining instance. The economy is neither the unproblematic effects of consumption on individuation, what Marx called the sphere of circulation, nor is it the recognition of the co-operative force of living labour, what Marx called the 'hidden abode of production'. The economy, what we could call, following Spinoza, man's utility to man, does not have a univocal sense; it is neither the assertion of an insurmountable competitive nature, nor is it the hidden reservoir of humanity's co-operative nature. Its sense and signification is determined in part through the various ways in which the economic relations are individuated, their representation and imaginary constitution. This can be seen as a radicalisation of Althusser's assertion that the economy necessarily presupposes ideology, an imaginary relation to its real conditions.³¹ Balibar illustrates this with a rather cursory but provocative definition of the imaginary of the economy in the current conjuncture. As Balibar writes, 'The capitalist is defined as a worker, as an

³⁰ Balibar 2004, p. 19.

³¹ As Balibar writes, 'I have, as it were, made the imaginary the "infrastructure of the infrastructure" itself, starting with the idea that all forces which interact in the economic-political realm are also collective groupings, and consequently possess an (ambivalent) imaginary identity' (Balibar 2002a, p. xiii).

“entrepreneur”; the worker, as the bearer of a capacity, of a “human capital”.³² The current historical moment can be described as an increasing reinterpretation of the productive nature of the capitalist, as the capitalist as entrepreneur becomes not just an activity creative of wealth, jobs, and growth (as in the current rhetoric of ‘job creators’), but the model of any productive activity whatsoever. It is the fetish of the productive power personified. Inversely, the worker is no longer seen as a collective identity, or even as a collective productive power, but as just one more instance of the general imperative to utilise one’s capital. The universalisation of the idea of human capital is the denial of exploitation. Lazzarato’s analysis of debt and the financialisation of worker’s compensation demonstrates in a different manner how this shift to ‘human capital’ is as much a transformation of practices and social relations as it is one of ideas. As Lazzarato argues, the wage, debt, and stocks are as much elements of different, but intersecting, productions of subjectivity as they are measures of the distribution of wealth. Human capital is not just an idea, an ideology, but a practice inscribed in everything from wage incentives to labour contracts.³³ The economy is inscribed twice, once as a set of economic relations and second as an interpretation of those relations. Similarly we could say that the political or social imaginary is inscribed twice, once in terms of the various ways of conceiving social belonging from citizen to nation and race, and again in terms of the effect of these relations on the distribution of economy. Thus, to return to Virno, any account of the massive transformations brought about by the transformations of post-Fordist labour is incomplete without equal consideration of the transformations of how that labour is organised and conceptualised.³⁴ The potential of post-Fordist communication must be coupled with the competition of neoliberalism that captures and actualises that potential. The maximum colinearisation of labour necessarily coincides with its maximum autonomy.³⁵

The idea of capitalism either destroying the conditions of individuation through consumption or containing a latent individuation through production ultimately overlooks not only Spinoza’s demand for an ontology of actualised essences, essences which are nothing other than their existing relations, but also Simondon’s assertion that transindividuality cannot simply be the effect of one instance, one cause, on others, the base determining superstructure, but necessitates a more complex thought of causality. Given that transindividuation passes through affects, imagination, knowledge, habits, and social rela-

32 Balibar 1994a, p. 52.

33 Dardot and Laval 2009, p. 410.

34 Gilbert 2014, p. 96.

35 Read 2009b, p. 34.

tions, the very process of transindividuation necessarily encompasses relations other than those determined by transformations in consumption and production. Or, more to the point, it includes those relations only insofar as they are intertwined with other relations, political and social, in terms of their real effects and imaginary representations. As much as Simondon's and Spinoza's understandings of transindividuality overlap in terms of positing a concept of causality that is nonlinear, immanent, and multiple, they would seem to diverge on a point which is just as fundamental. Spinoza's fundamental assertion that desire is always actualised, always determined in and through its affective relations would seem to directly contradict Simondon's fundamental thesis that individuation is always an incomplete process, that the individual always carries with it pre-individual relations. This second contradiction is annulled through the first point of similarity, the more we understand causality to be less a linear determination and more of the intersection of multiple causalities, a connection that is more a web or network than a linear determination, the more it is possible to see in Spinoza an indetermination that is not so much an absence of a cause, but an effect of multiple causes.³⁶ Or, to put this in Althusser's terms, overdetermination is inseparable from underdetermination. The multiple and intersecting individuations that constitute our existence do not cohere in anything like a total disindividuation or leave a reservoir of individuation untouched as potential.³⁷

Imagination, Affects, and Knowledge: Individuation is Always Metastable

In the previous section, I argued that the articulation of the politics and economics of transindividuality was less a matter of the destruction of politics by economics, as in the case of Stiegler, or the prefiguration of a politics by economics, as in the case of Virno, than a mutual displacement and transformation of political and economic individuations, as Balibar argued. The detour through Spinoza's account of individuation against Stiegler reinforces this point, not just because, as I argued in Excursus One, that Balibar's idea of 'the other scene' of the intersection of a mode of production and subjection is directly influenced by Spinoza's rational and affective foundation of social and political life. This displacement through the 'other scene', or other scenes, is also

36 Morfino 2014, p. 61.

37 Balibar 2004, p. 26.

a necessary consequence of Spinoza's assertion of the irreducible striving of the conatus. It is because we necessarily interpret, make sense of our condition, assembling together the various affects and encounters that this interpretation is always caught up in real relations and imaginary conditions, situated between the present articulations of society and politics and ideals of bygone social orders. Balibar argues that this irreducible individuality is not unique to Spinoza, but as a fundamental aspect of transindividual thought, it can also be found in Marx. As Balibar writes, 'The incompressible minimum of individuality and sociality that Marx describes with regard to capitalist exploitation is a fact of resistance to domination which, as he wished to show, did not have to be invented or incited, since it had always already begun'.³⁸ Reading Marx through Spinoza (or both through Balibar) makes it possible to understand that this irreducible minimum, this degree zero of individuation, does not have a necessary telos or direction. How people struggle and what they struggle for is in part determined by how they imagine or represent the conditions of both their subjection and liberation. This irreducible minimum of individuation can manifest itself just as much in the worker who struggles to develop her human capital as in the worker who organises a strike. The difference depends as much on the imagination as the material conditions, and most importantly on the way in which they intersect with and transform each other.

The irreducible singular condition of every conatus is the basis of a kind of 'combined and uneven transindividual individuation', as images and symbols from the past combine with current transformations. Of course, Spinoza is not unique in this perspective; Marx and the Marxist tradition carries its own theorisation of the combined and uneven development of transindividuation, from Marx's claim that 'the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living', to Gramsci's assertion that the spontaneous philosophy of everyman contains 'elements of the cave man, and principles of the most modern and advanced learning, shabby local prejudices of all past historical phases and intuitions of a future philosophy'.³⁹ What is perhaps unique to Spinoza, or the intersection between Spinoza and transindividuality, is that he situates these multiple and conflicting individuations on different levels of subjective experience, affective, imagination, and rationality. (To which we could add, following Stiegler and Virno, grammatisation, habits, and comportments.) If, as I argued with respect to Stiegler and Virno, it does not make sense to think in terms of either the destruction of politics by the consumer society of

38 Balibar 1995b, p. 122.

39 Marx 1968, p. 15, and Gramsci 1968, p. 59.

disindividuation or the creation of a new politics through the new relations of production, then it is even more important to grasp the relation between the intersecting individuations (political, economic, social, and technological). This is a fundamental shift of perspective; it is no longer a matter of examining consumption and production, or political relations and economic conditions, as two separate and distinct transindividuations, but instead understanding the different transindividuations insofar as their different pre-individual relations, affects, emotions, and knowledge intersect with and transform each other.

The work of Yves Citton has intersected strongly with both of the questions above: first, from the previous section, the intersection of activity and subjection, the assertion developed by Spinoza that passive activity constitutes the basis for subjection. Citton argues that what Spinoza offers in this formulation, or in the economy of affects more broadly, is a way of thinking through the transformation of power, both political and economic. Our imagination of power is too often predicated on 'hard power', on the power to directly dominate and control. Such an understanding is inadequate to contemporary forms of power, forms of 'soft power' that are defined by the rise of media technologies, democratic states, and participatory forms of production and consumption.⁴⁰ Without an understanding of how such forms of 'soft power' function without coercion or violence, we will continue to see ourselves as kingdoms within a kingdom, failing to see the coercions underlying our apparent freedom. As Citton argues, citing Foucault, we still have yet to cut off the head of the king when it comes to power, and this search for a central, unified, and subjectified form of command makes it harder to grasp the way in which power functions in our life, and the ways in which we act according to its structures and desires. Citton thus proposes a new imaginary of power, a new way of thinking of how power functions, that is itself predicated on the power of the imagination, the role that the imagination plays in securing both subjection and transformation. As Citton argues, this new imagination of power has its foundation in Spinoza's assertion that 'we neither strive for, nor will, neither want nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it or desire it' (EIIIP9Schol). As we have seen, this reorientation of desire does not so much constitute a Copernican revolution moving from the value of things to the self, but rather explodes the autonomy of the self into a universe of causal connections and an eternity of relations. Desire is not some unproblematic ground of individual actions, but the effect of other

40 Citton 2010b, p. 19.

actions. Citton argues that this assertion radically undermines any attempt to make desire the degree zero of autonomy, and to make the will of individuals the foundation of politics.⁴¹ Desires must be understood as produced. Spinoza's attentiveness to the production and historicity of desire becomes timely in an age in which the conditions for producing desire, for constituting new affects, have only increased and multiplied.

Second, in response to the first section of this chapter, Citton offers a fundamentally different way of making sense of the politics and economics of transindividuality than those proposed by Stiegler, Balibar, and Virno. It is not a matter of the destruction or prefigurative dimension of the economic relations of transindividuation, nor is it a displacement of the effects of these different scenes, different transindividuations, on each other. Citton returns to Simondon's work to argue that the different aspects of transindividuation, affects, imagination, knowledge, and so on, should be considered metastable.⁴² As we saw in Chapter 2, for Simondon individuation always emerges out of metastable states, out of unresolved potentials and relations. Individuation, whether it be the individuation of a physical process, such as Simondon's favourite example, a crystal, or of collectives or subjects, always emerges out of the tensions, tensions that it partially resolves, but that continue to animate it. Citton shifts this concept from ontology to his political and social philosophy, stressing that transformation should be seen less as a destruction (or constitution) of a stable structure, the destruction of subjectivity or the constitution of a new subject, than a passage from metastable state to metastable state.⁴³ There is no unity, no overarching structure, which holds together the affects, imagination, knowledge, and habits in a given conjuncture; there is at best a metastable relation, defined as much by tensions and conflicts as by connections and relations.

It is with respect to the first question above, namely that of the striving and power internal to every institution, that Citton examines the politics of the imagination, or as he calls it, 'mythocracy'. Citton's concept of mythocracy is not, as in Spinoza's concept of theocracy, exclusively concerned with the attempt to construct and maintain authority based on a stable imagination, nor is it, as in Stiegler's hypercapitalism, exclusively concerned with the new technologies that make it possible to disseminate memories and knowledge, although it overlaps with both concepts. Citton defines his concept of 'mythocracy' with

41 Citton 2006, p. 14.

42 Citton 2005, p. 3.

43 Citton 2012b, p. 57.

reference to three philosophical interventions that we have already considered. The first is Lazzarato's conception of noopolitics, a politics that acts in and on beliefs, ideas, and thoughts. To which Citton adds, or combines, Sévérac's concept of an 'occupation of spirit', stressing that control of thoughts and beliefs is first and foremost a politics of attention.⁴⁴ Attention, what interests or engages individuals, is necessarily understood as an economy, a division and distribution of time and energy. This division and distribution is necessarily defined and determined by love, hate, joy and sadness. 'In other words, the economy of attention can only exist if it is articulated with an economy of affects'.⁴⁵ Transindividuation is defined as much by what we pay attention to, what compels us, as what we think and feel, and is so through a combination of pre-individual conditions and collective relations.⁴⁶ Finally, Citton defines mythocracy through Lordon's 'energetic structuralism'. Whereas Lordon argued that the conatus was simultaneously structured by and structuring of the division of labour, the wage relation, and the desire for money, Citton finds the same fundamental relation in which the conatus, or striving, is fundamentally structured and structuring in myth and narrative. Narrative orients our desire, but does so only if it has initially captured our attention. The stories and narratives that drive and motivate us are both the cause and effect of our desires. Thus, it is possible to say that the order and connection of economic exploitation is the same as the order and connection of mythic representation, provided that order and connection refer to the same structuring dynamic, the same structure of the conatus, and not necessarily the same fundamental points of orientation and investment. As we saw in Excursus Two, it is precisely because the economic imagination, the narrative of successful entrepreneurs and lazy failures, is at a distance from the quotidian experience of subordination that it functions to reinforce the latter. The economy of attention functions in service of the economy of goods and labour by being at a distance from it.

Narrative, the telling of stories, is a powerful structure for what Citton calls, in a variant on Lordon's 'colinearisation', 'canalisation', the channelling of desire, imagination, and action. Stories attract our attention, and in doing so they shape our future attention and imagination. Narrative, or mythocracy, is an often overlooked point of intersection between quotidian existence and the transformation and functioning of powerful institutions. Citton demonstrates the way in which narrative channels and maintains the power over imagin-

44 Sévérac 2005, p. 218.

45 Citton 2010b, p. 29, my translation.

46 Citton 2008, p. 89.

ation, ideas, and desires through two primary means. The first is material, a control over the channels through which narratives are disseminated and produced.⁴⁷ In this manner Citton is closer to Marx and Engels, who initially identified ideology with control over the means of intellectual production, than to Stiegler, whose analysis is primarily one of the means of the production and dissemination of texts, images, and other forms of grammatisation.⁴⁸ The second, however, is more concerned with content, with images, symbols, and ideas. Citton's example here is a logo, or a celebrity turned politician.⁴⁹ In this case, there is a kind of sedimentation of affective value; what we loved once, what caused joy and hope becomes valued and desired even once it has been displaced to other terrains. These two dimensions often converge, defining Citton's understanding of noopolitics, as the media companies consolidate their control over material dissemination, owning multiple stations, studies, and publications, and affective canalisation, controlling multiple characters and narratives. (Citton's example here is Berlusconi in Italy, but one could also think of Disney, for which the ownership of characters is as important as owning television stations). Attention is the combination of material conditions and symbolic investments. Despite this overlap of infrastructure and symbolic value in the strategies of media companies and political legacies, these two strategies can also diverge; control over dissemination is not necessarily control of attention, and vice versa. For Citton, noopolitics is not a matter of just restricting the signs, the dominant images and ideas that are disseminated, nor of their dissemination, the control over the various forms of media, but rather of the intersection (and divergence) of the two.

Myth, the imagination, is not just a terrain of subjection; it can also be a terrain of liberation, of the transformation of our conditions. Citton turns to the spirit, if not the letter, of Spinoza's text to theorise this dimension of narrative. As Spinoza writes with respect to the power of the intellect, 'So long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect' (EVP10). Spinoza's reflection on the power of understanding is situated in a limited manner; it cannot overcome the affects that determine the body to act, but it can determine the order of its representations. The power of thinking is not in determining the body, thought itself can only think; to which Citton adds that the power of narrative is that of reordering our experiences, conducts,

47 Citton 2010b, p. 142.

48 Marx and Engels 1975, p. 172.

49 Citton 2010b, p. 144.

and relations.⁵⁰ It is not only possible to construct narratives that challenge the reigning narratives and values; it is also possible to reconstruct them, bringing them closer in line with the causal conditions of transforming our existence and away from the fetishised objects, mythologised subjects, and dominant narratives that channel our attention. Doing so involves an intersection with established narratives and values, which must in some sense be subverted and turned to different ends. Just as the established myths can only function by channelling the affects and desires of individuals into the values and ideals of a given political structure or ideology, the interruption can only take place through a transformation of these same established myths through their economies of affect and desire. Subjection and subversion are both transindividual relations: if they were not, the former would just be the forceful imposition of a collective norm and the latter would just be the idiosyncratic rebellion of a single voice.⁵¹

One could object that Spinoza was discussing the order and connection of ideas in and through the intellect, true knowledge of causal relations, and not through new imaginaries or myths. Citton's invocation of Spinoza along with such creation of new myths as Sun Ra and the Wu Ming collective flies in the face of the persistent image of Spinoza as a rationalist. This rationalist objection can in some sense be mitigated by the letter of Spinoza's text. First and foremost there is the fact that the imagination is a necessary condition of our finitude. Imagination and inadequate ideas are always part of our relation to the world. There is a more positive role of the imagination, connected not so much to our passivity, our inability to act, but rather to action. First, in order for ideas to become active, to take hold in the mind, they must demand our attention and affective involvement. As Spinoza writes, there is a limited efficacy of the true insofar as it is true (EIVP1). Even true causal knowledge of the world requires the imagination and affects to demand and sustain our attention. Second, what we can imagine limits and determines our capacity to act. As Spinoza writes, 'For whatever man imagines he cannot do, he necessarily imagines; and he is so disposed by this imagination that he really cannot do what he imagines he cannot do' (EIII Def. AffsXXVIII). Imagination, affect, is a necessary condition for becoming active.

Citton ultimately sketches out a three-part system of the politics of knowledge, which divides into information, invention, and interpretation. The first, information, is quantifiable, and, as in the case of statistics or credit scores,

⁵⁰ Citton 2010b, p. 76.

⁵¹ Citton 2010b, p. 183.

is created without the conscious participation of the subjects involved, while the second, invention, is the idiosyncratic and unique creation of a gifted individual. The first two types of knowledge, information and invention, are the forms of knowledge valued in contemporary capitalism, but their valorisation takes radically different forms. The first is the work of data entry operators, subject to Fordist rule, or to the collective work of a consumer society whose actions continually produce information, while the latter is the work of the valorised entrepreneur.⁵² Given that these first two types of knowledge divide along the collective and individual, it is perhaps not surprising that Citton's interest is in interpretation, which he sees as a necessarily transindividual relation, passing between the collective production of information and singular inventions.⁵³ Interpretation is situated between the collective and tacit knowledge, which forms the backdrop of everyday activity, and the singular transformations that work from this backdrop, contesting it and transforming it. A new interpretation, a new way of making sense of the world, just like a new narrative, is neither an anonymous and collective project, nor a singular act of genius, but the indiscernible point where the two meet. Myth and interpretations are subject to the same transindividual conditions, framed between the singular and the common. Where they differ is not so much in the truth of one and the falsity of the other, but rather in the former's necessity to work with, and thus interpret, facts, and the latter's ability to contest and construct the given of the world.⁵⁴ What Virno called the public intellect is torn between myth and interpretation, both disseminated in fundamentally different ways through different channels.

The imagination, or mythocracy, is not Citton's last word on the politics of transindividuality. Nor is his critique of political economy limited to the economy of knowledge. Citton's interest in mythocracy, in the imagination, as a transindividual relation of subjection and subversion is complemented by his work on affect and what he calls the politics of pressures. While his work on the economics of information, interpretation, and invention is supplemented by an investigation of the political economy of gestures. These different areas remain relatively discrete areas of examination for Citton, forming the basis of separate studies and investigations. The division between gestures and interpretation, between the order and connection of interpretations and that of actions and comportments, is not just a heuristically necessary methodolo-

⁵² Citton 2010a, p. 16.

⁵³ Citton 2010a, p. 118.

⁵⁴ Citton 2010b, p. 180.

gical division, but instead reflects the disparate nature of transindividuation. Gestures circulate without being interpreted, while myths and interpretations circulate without necessarily being acted on, at least directly.⁵⁵ The order and connection of the affective, the mythic, and the gestural share the same order and connection in that they are necessarily transindividual, encompassing both structures and striving, without necessarily affecting or determining each other.

Citton takes up the question of gestures, of a politics of gestures, against the dominant trend to see gestures as mannerism and affections far from the realm of political effects. As Citton argues, this is reflected in the origin and genealogy of the term; by definition, a gesture is something that does not realise itself in any effect, and this is what separates it from action.⁵⁶ Citton supplements this definition first by expanding upon the anthropological meaning of gesture, and, secondly, by reflecting on the fundamental shifts in the transmission and communication of gestures in contemporary society. With respect to the former, Citton defines 'gestures' as the habits, comportments, and attitudes that human beings adopt and enact. 'The gesture is situated midway between reflex reactions, incorporated in my most basic motor reactions, and the processes of subjectivation that question one's identity and position in the social world'.⁵⁷ Gestures are both highly idiosyncratic, even singular – nothing defines a particular individual more than his or her way of walking or holding a cigarette – and shared or imitated. This imitation passes not only through the immediate contacts of social existence, but also through the highly mediated, and mediated, realm of film and video. Case in point: the entire gestural economy of smoking a cigarette is disseminated through various films. Jameson describes this global dissemination of habits and practices:

The point is therefore that, alongside the free market as an ideology, the consumption of the Hollywood film form is the apprenticeship to a specific culture, to an everyday life as a cultural practice: a practice of which commodified narratives are the aesthetic expressions, so that the populations in question learn both at the same time. Hollywood is not merely a name for a business that makes money but also for a fundamental late-capitalist cultural revolution, in which old ways of life are broken up and new ones set in place.⁵⁸

55 Citton 2012b, p. 135.

56 Citton 2012a, p. 38.

57 Citton 2010b, p. 154, my translation.

58 Jameson 1998, p. 63.

While Jameson's point comes close to Stiegler's politics of adoption, the emphasis here, as it relates to Citton, is less on a new structuring of memory than on a less conscious dissemination of bodies and ways of moving. The latter constitutes a fundamental change in the transmission of gestures, which up until this point could only be described if frozen in a pose. Citton draws from Giorgio Agamben's writing on the connection between gesture and cinema; gesture and not the image, Agamben argues, is the fundamental medium of film, what it works with and expresses.⁵⁹ The ineffectivity of gesture thus must be historicised; gestures were previously seen as ineffective because they did not communicate, they could only be described or pictured.⁶⁰ We are now surrounded by the reproduction and mediation of gestures. Gestures are always determined, conditioned; at their basis they are always imitations and repetitions of other gestures, but it is precisely because they are conditioned that they can have effects. A gesture can always be the precondition for other gestures; it can always become the basis for future repetitions and imitations.⁶¹ Or, reframed in Spinoza's terminology, because we are determined, that is to say our gestures are affected and mediated by others, we can have effects on others. This tendency for gestures to proliferate has only been intensified by their technological mediation.

While gestures cross the same anthropological and political terrain as myths, being both transindividual and radically rearticulated by contemporary technology, they are radically distinct. Myths are tied to interpretation, to the drive to locate some sense and meaning in action, while gestures circulate and are adopted without necessarily meaning anything. Gestures, Citton argues, are more lived than interpreted, and can even be lived, reproduced, without necessarily becoming a part of one's interpretation of the world. That gestures are not interpreted by us, becoming a part of our consciousness, of our sense of self and the world, does not mean that they are not interpreted and recorded by others. Citton locates gesture at the intersection of two different processes of recording and inscription, often identified with two different phases or aspects of capital. First, there is the tendency for capital to make gestures, the gestures of work and labour, abstract and interchangeable, to impose on the multiplicity of labouring bodies a uniform standard of productivity and action. On this point, Citton is following the general logic of proletarianisation, but in a manner that is closer to Marx's original sense (as well as Hegel's

59 Agamben 2000, p. 56.

60 Citton 2012a, p. 104.

61 Citton 2012b, p. 157.

understanding of labour) than Stiegler's expansion of the term. It is a matter of sanding off the rough edge of particularity, of making the individual a cog in the machine. Proletarianisation does not so much deprive the worker of knowledge, at least not necessarily so, as it makes the labour of this or that worker interchangeable with the work of others. The gesture of the assembly-line worker and the fast-food worker are standardised, repetitive, and uniform. To which we could add, overcoming the division between mental and manual labour, the gestures of the programming or call-centre operator are no less standardised. Second, there is the tendency for capital to capture existing gestures and habits, a tendency not to impose a standard but to capture gestures and diffuse movements throughout society. On this second point, Citton is close to Virno (and Negri) in arguing that capital increasingly appropriates or captures habits and comportments, styles of living and existing that are external to it, as new forms for the production and circulation of commodities. As we saw with Stiegler and Virno, these two tendencies are generally considered to be either two very different theories of labour, labour as proletarianisation, the standardisation of actions, or as capture, the incorporation of a multiplicity of heterogeneous and singular actions. Or, as is more often the case, as corresponding to two different phases of capital, the first to the industrial or Fordist stage, in which capital dictated the form of labouring co-operation, while the second corresponds to the post-Fordist stage in which capital is increasing dependent on putting to work sensibilities, habits, and gestures that are produced and that circulate outside of the factory.⁶² Citton,

62 As Carlo Vercellone argues, Marx's stages of capitalism can be understood in terms of how the intellect of the worker is incorporated into the productive process. In the first stage, that of formal subsumption, the formal imposition of the wage and commodity production on a pre-existing technical and social labour process leaves much of the 'hegemony of knowledge' in the hands of the workers (Vercellone 2007, p. 16). The knowledge of production exists in social relations prior to its capitalist organisation. The technical and social subsumption of labour is also a subsumption of the knowledge of workers, as the skill and knowledge of work is either embodied in machines or dictated through a Taylorist separation of conception and execution. As Vercellone writes, 'Mass education and the development of a diffuse intellectuality make education a central site for the crisis of the Fordist wage relation. The key role attributed to the theme of a "socialized and free" sector of education in the conflicts concerning the control of "intellectual powers of production" is, therefore an essential element of Marx's elaboration of the notion of the general intellect. The establishment of a diffuse intellectuality is configured as the necessary historical condition, even if, in the *Grundrisse*, this reference is implicit and, in some cases, concealed by a dialectical approach to the evolution of the division of labour that privileges the analysis of structural changes instead of the institutions and the subjects which could

however, posits both of these tendencies as integral to capitalism, which must be understood as processes of both standardisation and singularisation. As Citton writes,

There is a constant back and forth between subjectivation and desubjectivation, between automation and resistance, between translation and untranslatable, between semiotic and asemiotic signification, which unfolds along with the fabrication of individuals and the development of capital.⁶³

Mechanisation and standardisation constantly create the capacities for new singularisations and standardisations, the automatic and habitual gestures of driving the automobile open up the spaces for new singularisations with respect to the satellite radio signal or cell phone. Like Lazzarato, Citton draws from Deleuze and Guattari's distinction in which functional 'machinic enslavement' is distinguished from 'social subjection', whereby the former breaks down the individual to gestures and actions that can be incorporated into a larger machine, a factory or call centre, while the latter incorporates the individual as a subject, as a creator or generator of gestures.⁶⁴ Citton stresses that these two different gestural economies must be understood to exist in relation, a relation of neither succession nor dialectical negation, but one that is constantly being redefined at each stage in the historical process. There is constant back and forth between mechanisation and capture, standardisation and singularisation, as new technologies produce new habits, new predictable gestures, which in turn liberate more time and space for idiosyncratic comport-

have originated these transformations' (Vercellone 2007, p. 27). Vercellone's history is one that passes from formal subsumption, in which mercantile capital captures pre-existing skills and knowledge of work, to real subsumption, in which the Fordist factory creates and controls the productive knowledge, and ultimately to a new formal subsumption as a capital relies on this diffuse intellectual capability (Leonardi 2010, p. 256). This diffusion must be understood as a product of struggle, a struggle in which resistance to wage labour also incorporates a struggle for education, education understood as the precondition for not only increased wages but also a fundamental transformation of the relations of subordination and domination that define the subsumption of labour. Which is not to say that the transformations of the general intellect, or the social brain, can be entirely reduced to the struggle over knowledge, just as it cannot be entirely reduced to the technological transformation of capital. The two continually intersect and transform each other.

63 Citton 2012b, p. 143, my translation.

64 Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 458.

ments.⁶⁵ As with the politics and economics of knowledge highlighted above, the divide between the standard and exceptional effaces the transindividual relations that pass between the two. Subjectivity is defined by this interplay of standardisation and singularisation, machinic enslavement and social subjection.

Myth, interpretation, and gestures are all transindividual, situated between the collective and the individual, providing the conditions for the articulation of both groups and individuals. They have the same basic fundamental order and connection, but, to borrow another formulation from Spinoza, they do not intersect; interpretations do not determine gestures, and vice versa. The fact that gestures have no necessary relation with interpretation, with myths and narrative, functioning alongside or beneath them with separate dynamics and relations, begins to frame Citton's general approach to the politics of transindividuation. Citton understands every conjuncture, every historical social formation, to be a metastable relation of multiple transindividual relations. Simondon uses the term metastable to refer to the pre-individual relations and tension that constitute the basis for every process of individuation. A crystal emerges from a metastable solution, just as determinant sensibilities and concepts of the world emerge from a metastable relation of affects and perceptions. A metastable relation is one of flux and transformation, framed between the disparate conditions that it contains and the individuations that it makes possible. Thus, turning back to the question of social and political relations, rather than understand the conjuncture as defined by a singular political or economic transindividuation, the proletarianisation of daily life or the constitution of the social individual of the multitude, or even the tension between political, economic, and social individuations, the displacements of the other scene, a conjuncture is the interrelation of disparate affects, myths, gestures, and knowledge. Rather than think of a social formation as a structure, as a collective individuation, it is more accurate to think of it as metastable, containing tensions and uneven relations between different components of transindividual individuations. These tensions are never completely resolved; every new society or social formation is also metastable, although its tensions and relations differ. Social relations are perpetually defining new problems, new relations. As Citton argues following Simondon, metastability is the condition for change, novelty, and difference, but it also must be thought as a paradoxical and disparate unity defining the conjuncture.⁶⁶

65 Citton 2012b, p. 143.

66 Citton 2012b, p. 58.

As much as Citton's invocation of metastability can be understood as a return of the concept of transindividuality back to Simondon's ontology, it is important to differentiate Citton's sense of the concept from any kind of Simondonian orthodoxy or, worse yet, a naturalisation of social and political relations in which all of society becomes a crystal solution (or geological formation). Metastability in this context can be understood as drawing together two different aspects of transindividuality considered in the previous chapters. First, there is the differential temporality of the history of transindividual identities. Race, citizen, worker, and consumer do not so much displace each other in a linear progression, but intersect and overlap in the overdetermined temporality of the present. This point is developed most strongly by Balibar's reading of transindividuality. Second, and closer to Citton's own reading, there is the heterogeneity of the different aspects of the pre-individual; gestures, affects, habits, knowledge, and language do not necessarily affect or determine each other. They are each fundamentally disparate and different, with their own causal connections and methods of dissemination. Affects, gestures, and imagination travel at different speeds and through different channels. Drawing these two different theses together, it is possible to say that metastability is the effect of the uneven history of transindividual individuations and the differential causality of pre-individual relations.

The metastable relation of individuation can be illustrated with respect to an example that is central to Citton's political concerns, the rise of right-wing populism. Citton argues that populism can be grasped first at the level of affects, through its affective composition of fear and anxiety. These affects are themselves effects of such economic causes as the precarious status of work and the general proletarianisation of existence. Affects are necessarily inadequate ideas, not comprehending the causal conditions that have produced them. This makes it possible for these affects to be attached to different narratives, different myths, which channel and capture them. As the affects are channelled, attached to particular narratives and ideas of the 'good people' versus the elite or foreign outsiders, these narratives become all the more entrenched. The power, *potentia*, of the imagination of the multitude is caught in a feedback loop, whereas the more it takes on certain objects as its goals, the more those objects appear as its natural or necessary goals.⁶⁷ Populism inscribes itself within particular narratives of state, nation, and people, redefining them through the affective transformation of fear and anger. Finally, we could add that this particular metastable formation, that of right populism, is equally

67 Citton 2010b, p. 51.

dependent on technological conditions of the dissemination of not only opinions, but also affective sensibilities, through various forms of media. Populism can thus be understood as a metastable articulation of affects and imagination, but it could equally be grasped as an effect of the temporal asynchronicity of the different transindividual individuations. Populism addresses the uncertainties and instabilities of the contemporary labour situation by returning to an imaginary of racialised belonging. To put it in Balibar's terms, populism effectively skips over the transindividuation of the citizen, of modernity, addressing the most contemporary anxieties of being expandable with the most antiquated notions of what defines a nation or collective community.⁶⁸ Thus populism is one instance of a differential history of the current conjuncture, drawing together the old and the new. What is important for Citton, however, is less how we theorise populism and more how metastability opens up new spaces of political practice and engagement; Citton's political point is to move beyond the position of being for or against populism, of deciding for it as an expression of popular will, which must be respected out of some democratic idea of the rule of the many, or being against it because of the ignorance and hostility of their objects.⁶⁹ Populism should be neither celebrated as the authentic will of the people, nor mocked as the delusion and madness of crowds, but understood as an effect of relations which are as predictable as the geometric forms. What could appear to be somewhat naturalised phenomena, the ignorance and tribal hostility of the masses, or even a monolithic structure, the will of the people, must be grasped as a metastable relation, whose constitutive dimensions hold together in and through constitutive tensions.

As much as the concept of metastability makes it possible to posit constitutive tensions and disruptions in what otherwise appears as a natural entity or a historical inevitability, Citton's real interest in the concept lies in how it makes it possible to grasp not the constitution of economic and political relations, but their transformation. Thinking gestures, affects, and myths as different transindividual relations makes it possible to see the way in which one aspect not only can be in constitutive tension with the others, but also can break free, constituting the basis for a new metastable relation. A gesture can be reproduced, duplicated, and communicated, and the boundaries of this communication often exceed the boundaries drawn by myths of community, and the affects that structure a given individuation. Citton's examples of this process are taken from the contemporary series of struggles from the Arab

68 Balibar 1991g, p. 57.

69 Citton 2010c, p. 172.

Spring to Occupy Wall Street; these different and divergent sites of struggle were defined by the proliferation of gestures, from occupation itself to various gestures that articulated the constitution of collectives. While these different sites, different nations, and locations, are radically different in terms of their economic relations, national mythologies, and structures of power, they are connected by the same technological economy of gestures. Once these gestures circulate, breaking free of a determinate condition, they begin to transform the affective, imaginative, and political structures of society. The metastability of any given social formation, of all social formations, means that any particular relation, affects, gestures, and myths, could become the basis for a transformation, for a new individuation. It is not just gestures that constitute the basis for a new individuation, crossing disparate and disconnected social formations, but affects and myths as well.

While Citton's metastable understanding of the politics and economics of transindividuality provides a way of making sense of the changing dynamics of metastability, it is less clear on the relations of causality and determination that define these relations. Metastability cannot mean that at any given moment, every aspect, affect, gesture, and myth is equally capable of determining and transforming the other relations, creating the possibility for a new social and political individuation. Citton is not explicitly concerned with this problem of determination, but he does offer two ways of thinking through the effects of different transindividual individuations on each other. Citton sketches out some sense of the different articulations of the various transindividual relations in developing what he calls a 'politics of pressures'. What Citton means by this can be briefly glimpsed by examining what is generally meant by invocations of 'political pressure'. Even in its conventional use by politicians and journalists, 'political pressure' has an eccentric relationship to the standard oppositions of individual and collective, imaginary and real. The conventional use of the term suggests a set of attitudes and beliefs that passes between individuals and groups without necessarily being institutionalised or even explicitly thematised. Pressure is implicitly acknowledged to be transindividual even within a discourse that privileges the individual. Citton's sense of the phrase 'politics of pressure' draws as much from the wage relation, however, as it does from political punditry. The struggle over wages is a struggle defined by pressures. What the wage relation offers is a way to think of both a perpetual conflict, a conflict over the terms and conditions of the selling of labour power, and the various institutions and structures that intensify or decrease this struggle. Pressure defines the wage relation, which is always the contestation of two forces, capitalist and workers, over the same commodity. The worker wants as much as possible for her labour power, while the capitalist wants to buy it cheaply

and extract the most value from it. As Marx writes, 'Between equal rights, force decides'.⁷⁰

That this conflict exists does not necessarily mean that it is manifest as pressure; pressures can be neutralised and mediated. The very pressures that have defined modernity have been undermined through the reorganisation of the affects and imagination. The idea of workers as human capital, as individual companies of one, seeks not only to colinearise the worker's desire with that of the striving and goals of the corporation, as Lordon argued, but it also defuses the very possibility of political or economic pressure, depriving it of symbolic expression and narrative coherence. The neoliberal world is a world that aspires to stability in the face of its supposed dynamism and change, overcoming the tensions between worker and capitalist, citizen and worker, in one singular image of the subject as entrepreneur of themselves.⁷¹ This flattening of the very dimensions of individuation paradoxically demands multiple institutions and relations. It is produced at the level of myth, at the level of economic relations, and at the level of affective composition, constituted as much as a particular 'structure of feeling', of cynicism and opportunism, as it is a 'spontaneous philosophy' of *homo economicus*. Such a tendency to suppress metastability, to make all individuations cohere in one figure, returns us to the question of transformation and reproduction of individuation addressed above. Is it possible to completely suppress the centrifugal force of individuation, the different associations, affects, and narratives that individuals necessarily create in their different lives, which constitute different histories? To which we could add a second question, one drawn from Balibar: Is it possible to efface the very asynchronicity of history, purging the present of anything that would retain the traces of past individuations of worker or citizen? The answer would have to be 'no'. Tensions and remnants necessarily exist. Even cynicism and opportunism are not without their ambivalence. To which it is important to add that the individuation of the worker as 'entrepreneur of the self' is all the more effective in the way that it engages activity, striving, and desire. As we saw with respect to Lordon, such an individuation does not present itself as the suppression of individuation in the face of some standard of collective belonging, but rather as its absolute and adequate expression. This is only possible if the conditions of its production, the narrowing of options through the wage relation and the canalisation of desire through mythocracy, remain both hidden and naturalised. Metastability is an ever present aspect of any society, an effect of the heterogen-

70 Marx 1977, p. 344.

71 Brown 2005, p. 205.

eity and history of transindividuation, but it can be more or less perceptible, more or less an acute experience of intellectual, affective, and mythic existence.

Metastability defines both individual and collective individuation; individuals and societies are defined by affects, imagination, knowledge, and gestures that have effects on each other without cohering into a uniform structure. Without this condition, change and transformation would be impossible. Metastability is not the sheer assertion that everything is complex and thus anything is possible. There are levels of degrees and determination, but these degrees and determination are relative to the specific transindividuation under consideration: narrative, the interpretation of the world, has the specific force of the ability to connect and relate different actions, gestures, and affects, giving them a sense; gestures, the habits and comportments that define our corporeal existence, remain in some sense outside of the direct action of narratives, caught in their own cycles of communication and exploitation; and lastly, affects function as a kind of relation between the two – without affects, without the force of desire or belief, no narrative, no matter how true, could take hold, and without affects, gestures are just mechanical repetitions. It might then seem that the affective level, affective composition, is determinant, but affects without narratives, without actions, remain just different intensities of power. Affects require myths to structure them, and gestures to activate them. Ultimately, Citton's assertion of the metastable nature of transindividuation, like Balibar's other scene, increasingly points to a conjunctural element of analysis. Ultimately the difference between the two is less a strict opposition than different ways of addressing the same fundamentally conjunctural point; whereas Balibar stresses the necessary overdetermination of the different transindividual individuations, worker, citizen, race, and nation, Citton stresses the necessary metastable nature of the different pre-individual dimensions, affects, myth, race, and knowledge. In either case, the fundamental conclusion is the same, namely that we cannot determine in advance when and how a particular narrative or gesture might displace a given individuation; such relations can only be thought from the ground up, from the specific compositions. The fundamental difference then is in terms of how they propose to examine this conjuncture, either from the transindividual individuations and their overdetermined historicity, or from the metastability of the different pre-individual dimensions.

Conclusion: Phase Shifts

Up until this point, I have presented the different articulations of the politics and economics of transindividuation as a linear succession from Stiegler's economic destruction of political individuation to Citton's articulation of the metastable conditions of individuation. The linearity of this presentation has been in part to suggest a more adequate understanding of the politics and economics of transindividuation. As much as this presentation has been linear, it is not one in which the remnants of bygone perspectives are simply bypassed. Negation is determination, critiques are meant to clarify and define the concepts under consideration. The corollary of this is that there is sublation of that which is subjected to critique in the next stage. The general insight shared by Stiegler and Virno, despite or perhaps because of their opposition, namely that existing relations of production and consumption have transformed the conditions for individuation, is maintained. In this respect, Stiegler's critical understanding of the destruction of attention and collective belonging through consumption is just as important as Virno's understanding of the increasingly public nature of the products of a general intellect. What is discarded, however, is the idea that the economy can entirely transform individuations, so much so that it can entirely destroy or create an entirely different condition for individuation. In this regard, Balibar's 'other scene' is useful for thinking the way in which economic individuations are displaced into the constitution of political identities and individuations, the structuring of race, nation, and even citizenship by the economic hierarchies and relations, and political individuations are displaced onto the economy, as the economic is itself determined by ideas of freedom, activity, and passivity, which define such individuations as 'human capital' or 'entrepreneur'. Balibar's distinction between 'political', 'economic', and civil individuations are perhaps better grasped not just in terms of thinking in terms of two (or three, remembering his attention to the scene of racial, ethnic, and national imaginaries) radically distinct transindividuations, political and economic (as well as cultural), but also in terms of the pre-individual relations, affects, myths, and gestures that traverse political, economic, and cultural individuations. Such a shift from the political and the economic as discrete spheres to the transindividual conditions that traverse them was perhaps already at work in Balibar's thought, especially since as we saw in Excursus Two he develops it from Spinoza's dual foundations of the state, rational and imaginative, in order to argue that every nation state combines real agreement and imaginary identification. Citton's argument only extends this point, claiming that the political is less a bounded space, or even a coherent individuation, as it is traversed by affects, myths, and gestures. As such it is always permeated by

the economic reorganisation of the gestures and affects of individuation. Similarly the economic is less a bounded space, a hidden abode, than a site for the production and dissemination of gestures, the conflict and attenuation of pressures. The economic and the political are always intersecting, always at work in every individuation.

If Citton's concept of metastability can be understood as a certain transformation of Balibar's argument, extending it to its necessary conclusion, then it is equally important to perhaps correct Citton's argument with one drawn from Balibar and Althusser. Which is to say that as much as it might be useful to think of the dimensions of transindividuation in any conjuncture, the combination of affects, myths, and gestures as metastable, a claim that extends the earlier claim about the 'combined and uneven' individuations, there is still a need to think determination, positing necessity in contingency. This can be seen negatively in Citton's own work, for as much as he writes about the conflicting demands to both standardise and singularise gestures, or the attenuation of class conflict through the legal, affective, and mythic restructuring of the labour relation, the conditions and causes of these transformations remains unaccounted for. Citton's turn towards political economy, towards the transformations of capital, is in part informed by a desire to shift from the ideal of politics as a radical event to an idea of politics as that which is always taking place, from transcendence to immanence. However, taking political economy, or the basic phenomenology of the workplace, as a figure from which to rethink and thematise a politics of gestures and pressures is not the same as engaging in the critique of political economy. Citton has a great deal to say about the change of pressures and gestures in the last thirty or fifty years. But absent from Citton's work is any analysis of the economics of the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, conceived in any narrative of crisis or economic transformation; it is framed entirely as a transformation of gestures. In a similar manner, neoliberalism's political strategy of attenuating pressures is examined as a political strategy without an economic analysis as to why such a shift took place. Political economy becomes a way to reconceptualise politics, rather than a field to be examined in its own respects. The merit of this method is that it makes politics less an exception, an event, than something that is always taking place, drawing attention to the quotidian struggles and pressures that always exist. The fundamental constitutive dimensions of pressures and gestures are always at work, and are constantly being reworked as they intersect with individuality and collectivity.

Thus, it might be possible to say that while the relations of affects, myths, and gestures are metastable, subject to multiple relations and individuations, the conditions of these relations, the last instance of the economic, is subject to a different level of causality. This might be satisfactory, but it overlooks the

fact that this metastable relation of affects, myths, and gestures must in turn act on the economy; without a working class or workers, who have the required affective and imaginary individuations, the economic itself would not function. In order for the lonely hour of the last instance to arrive, it must arrive in person, in the subjects that are competent enough and docile enough to reproduce the existing economic relations. Determination of the metastable, or necessity in contingency, is not the monolithic and linear causality of the economy on all other individuations, political, cultural, technological. It is in some sense a determination that necessarily passes through the other scene, an other scene that sets the scene for the major transformations of acts, the phase shifts that make it possible to pass from stability to revolution. The existing mode of production can withstand multiple different individuations; it is indifferent to whether or not workers are compelled by an affective composition dominated by hope or fear, or whether the dominant myth is that of a moralising work ethic or a self-motivated entrepreneur (although one might be more profitable than the other). However, there are certain individuations, what Lordon called indignant, but which could also be called revolutionary, that are no longer reproductive of the system. At a certain point, the metastable dimensions of individuation cross a threshold, the affects are too angry or fearful, the narratives too rebellious, the gestures too disruptive, and at that point the individuation of the collective is no longer reproductive of the social order; in other words, revolution.

Conclusion

After the development of such a radical *pars destruens*, after the identification of a solid point of support by which the metaphysical perspective reopens, the elaboration of the *pars construens* requires a practical moment. The ethics could not be constituted in a project, in the metaphysics of the mode and of reality, if it were not inserted into history, into politics, into the phenomenology of a single and collective life: if it were not to derive new nourishment from that engagement.¹



Perhaps every conclusion closes on the question of practice, on the difference that a particular line of inquiry makes on the world. Or perhaps every conclusion should. In this case the question of practice can be differentiated into three distinct but overlapping problems. First, there is transindividuality as a philosophical practice. This philosophical practice is defined first and foremost by a refusal of the false binary of the individual and society, examining the points of intersection of individuation and collective existence. This practice is resolutely critical in that the task is not simply to dismiss ‘individualistic’ and ‘collective’ understandings of social relations, but to show how such perspectives emerge from transindividual relations and practices. Transindividuality as a philosophical perspective necessarily includes a theory of how the imaginary apprehension of one’s condition emerges from the very relations that define one’s condition. Transindividuality is a critical perspective on our impoverished notions of both collectivity and individuality, not in the sense that it simply opposes them in a sterile opposition of true to false, but in the sense that it comprehends the way in which images and ideas of collectivity and individuality emerge from transindividual relations. This brings us to the second dimension of transindividuality as a philosophical practice: transindividuality as a kind of philosophical practice necessarily exceeds the boundaries of philosophy proper, turning from the speculative and ontological matter to one that is infused with politics, economics, and history. The necessity of this expansion can be seen in the passage from Marx discussed in the introduction,

¹ Negri 1991, p. 84.

which argues that 'the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social ... relations'.² It is not just in Marx that one finds this introduction of the socio-historical dimension into the question of individuation; even that supposedly most speculative of philosophers, Spinoza, finds that individuation is as much a question of religion, the politics of his time, as it is one of history. Transindividuality is not merely a speculative idea, but a problem that cannot be separated from historical and political practices of individuation. It is quite possible then that the very problem that orients this book, the division between individuality and social relations, is itself a historical project, not just in the sense that decades of ideological battles have made the individual standing against the collective an ideological rallying cry – making it necessary to reanimate the problem of individuation beneath this ideology of individualism. But that capitalism itself as a social relation produces an imaginary of isolated individuals against an all-powerful and naturalised system. Thus any project that escapes this binary, even those such as Simondon's that are articulated on primarily speculative or ontological terrain, are themselves products of this historical conjuncture even as they try to escape the clutches of its concepts. The very emergence of transindividuation as a philosophical problem has itself to be seen as a product of a particular stage of social relations, of the relations of production. It is not enough, however, to simply state this, as if the conjunctural nature of one's central provocation was enough to guarantee its timeliness and relevance. Every concept, even those that declare their universal or transcendental nature, is a product of its time. Transindividuality demands a more thorough engagement with history. Given that transindividual individuation depends on affects, habits, knowledge, and gestures, a speculative discourse can only describe the general parameters of individuation. Any knowledge or understanding of individuation must engage with the changing nature of its conditions; as Stiegler argues, there is no knowledge of individuation that is not itself an individuation, a transformation of the problem. Thus, if transindividuality demands a new practice of philosophy, a new intellectual practice, then the parameters of this practice exceed philosophy itself. It is not enough to theorise affects, myths, and gestures that constitute the basis of individuation without at least addressing not only the changing nature of affects, myth, and gestures, but also the changing nature of their dissemination and communication. Hence the turn towards an analysis of contemporary capitalism. There are multiple risks to such a practice, risks we have seen in Stiegler's and Virno's

2 Marx 1973, p. 83.

overstating of the epochal shifts of transindividuation, risks stemming from the confluence of historical specificity and philosophical generalisation. As I have argued, Stiegler and Virno overlook the principle of combined and uneven development not only of capitalism, but also of transindividual relations, in taking one aspect, the increasing synchronisation of minds through technology or the communicative aspect of capital, as the defining and determining aspect of the present. Their merit, however, lies in breaking from a model of philosophy based on the eternal truths, in trying to think the specificity of this moment, and the tendencies that are transforming it. Rather than defending or castigating Virno and Stiegler on this point, I prefer to see it as an occupational hazard of defining a new mode of philosophical practice. My task here has been to compile and combine different approaches to transindividuation, not out of some eclecticism, but in order to address the real movement of the current conjuncture.

The final question of practice exceeds the intellectual, philosophical or otherwise, to become a question of political practice. While this question has been partly bracketed in such a work, partly due to the intuition that if the contours of transindividuation are conjunctural and singular, then the same must be said for any practical orientation towards transindividuation. However, it is at least possible to say what a practice is not, drawing in negative the contours of its intervention. It would not be a search for a new subject of politics of the sort that Badiou argues for when he writes,

This political subject has gone under various names. He used to be referred to as a 'citizen', certainly not in the sense of the elector or town councillor, but in the sense of the Jacobin of 1793. He used to be called 'professional revolutionary'. He used to be called 'grassroots militant'. We seem to be living in a time when his name is suspended, a time when we must find a new name for him.³

Badiou's passage reflects a general anxiety of contemporary politics: the worry that the revolutionary subjects of the past, such as the citizen, worker, or militant, have all disappeared and a new revolutionary subject must be found. It is a search for what Citton calls a 'grand politics', a politics founded on a rupture, a radical event, and a subject that could sustain it.⁴ Against this conception of politics, transindividuality, as it has been developed here, makes it clear that the

³ Badiou 2005, p. 120.

⁴ Citton 2012b, p. 60.

conditions of politics are less an event than multiple processes of transformation. The present is not some monolith. Politics then has as its condition not the event, not some ruptural break with the existing order, but the tensions and divisions within the existing order. Every conjuncture, every historical moment is defined by different individuations, political and economic, as well as tensions between the different elements of these individuations, as affects, habits, gestures, and knowledges combine in different ways in each. Politics is not a matter of waiting for some epochal event, or rupture, but is always taking place (even if disappointingly so) in the tensions and pressures that define every metastable articulation of individuations.

To the extent that this metastable conjuncture has an animating tension, it is the tension between economics and politics, between the capitalist mode of production and the possibilities for politics, possibilities that exceed the state. This is a tension, and not a contradiction, as the early Marx argued, because the terms and relations exceed the opposition between the universal and particular, between the citizen and bourgeois. Marx later split this 'one' of economic individuation, the bourgeois individual, into 'two', finding in capitalism two distinct processes of individuation. The first, that of the sphere of exchange, follows the basic idea of bourgeois subjectivity, animated by competition and individual interest, while the latter, that of the hidden abode of production, is defined by relations of co-operation. This basic division is further transformed and complicated by the transformations of the economy. The sphere of exchange becomes less the site of the assertion of individual autonomy and self-interest as the rise of consumer society brings with it the production of desires and interests through marketing. The hidden abode of production is transformed as well, becoming less hidden as production encompasses communication, knowledge, and relations that define and determine social life. Moreover, production and consumption are traversed by the transforming affective composition, as the economy becomes a site of fear and anxiety as much as one of hope. It is perhaps because of the conflictual nature of capitalism, split between production and consumption, that the economy does not have a univocal effect on individuation. The individuations of the economy are always displaced onto political individuations. And similarly the individuations of politics, freedom, subjection, autonomy, and domination are always displaced onto economic roles and relations. Even the precarity and instability of economic life can be represented as liberation and freedom. Economics is not a base acting in a universal manner on a superstructure of political positions and ideologies; its effects are much more conflicted and complex. But nor is it ever absent. Similarly politics is not just the unproblematic assertion of the citizen, of universality, but encompasses nationalism, races, and other

simultaneously real and imagined collectivities. Transindividuation cannot be thought outside of production and consumption, not just in how they structure such collectivities as class and nation, but in how they shape our habits, affects, and desires. Ultimately it is perhaps necessary to think not only in terms of the intersecting transindividuations of citizen and worker, but also in terms of the pre-individual affects, pressures, and myths that constitute them. We need to think what we could call, following Combes, the intimacy of the current conjuncture, and in doing so reorient what it means to transform it.

There are then two fundamental insights that transindividuality offers to any thought of political practice. The first is simply transindividuality itself, the assertion that the very conditions of our individuation, the affects, desires, habits, and gestures that seem most unique to us, are shared in ways that we do not recognise. This is not in itself a common interest, a collective belonging, or even a common sense, but provides the basis for the articulation of collective relations. Second, there is the fact that every conjuncture, every articulation of politics and economics, must be seen as metastable; the apparent coherence of affects, desires, habits, and the imagination in some supposed monolith that could be called 'neoliberalism', 'society of the spectacle', and so on, must be seen as being constituted by tensions and divisions as much as its unity. The metastability of the existing conjuncture means that the different elements that constitute it, affects, knowledge, and habits, are always capable of being organised differently, of becoming the basis for a different individuation. The politics implied by such a perspective, the idea that a gesture, an affect, or even a narrative, could spin off, eventually constituting the basis for a new individuation, a new collectivity, could seem inadequate to the task at hand, to transforming the existing political and economic order. This is certainly the case with respect to the examples given to us by Citton, the communication of gestures and the ruptures of myths that animated and rejuvenated our political sense in recent years. Now, as the 'Arab Spring' fades into the fall of Occupy Wall Street and beyond, the gestures, affects, and myths that have circulated seem too slight to constitute anything that could transform the current condition, that could constitute a new individuality, a new collective project. Many of these politics and projects have collapsed into slogans disconnected from affects and gestures separated from concepts. This is not an unfounded criticism, but it is possible that the politics being proposed here will look very different from the politics that have come before, producing different individuations. However, it does speak to a real need, the demand to articulate and link together the different individuations into a new knowledge that could counter the dominant ideology and imaginary. As Spinoza argues, the power of the intellect is to connect and order the different thoughts; it acts on the conditions of thought, but

the ultimate goal is to reorient thought in order to act. Transforming the order of philosophy in order to transform the world. This book has been part of such a project.

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